LONG LIVE VINYL

ISSUE 36
MARCH 2020
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SUPERGRASS
"IN MY MIND IT'S NOW OR NEVER"

WIRE
"THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE BAND IS NEW MATERIAL"

IGGY'S LOST DECADE
"IT WAS HARROWING BUT AMAZING..."

ISOBEL CAMPBELL
"IF I COULD BE IN THE STUDIO THE REST OF MY LIFE I WOULD"

59 NEW REVIEWS!
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BLACK SABBATH
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HOW THE KINGS OF DARKNESS REINVENTED ROCK
+ 40 ESSENTIAL BLOOD-CURDLING LPS TO COLLECT

JOHNNY MARR
"I'M 100% POP. I HAVE 45RPM TATTOOED ON MY ARM"

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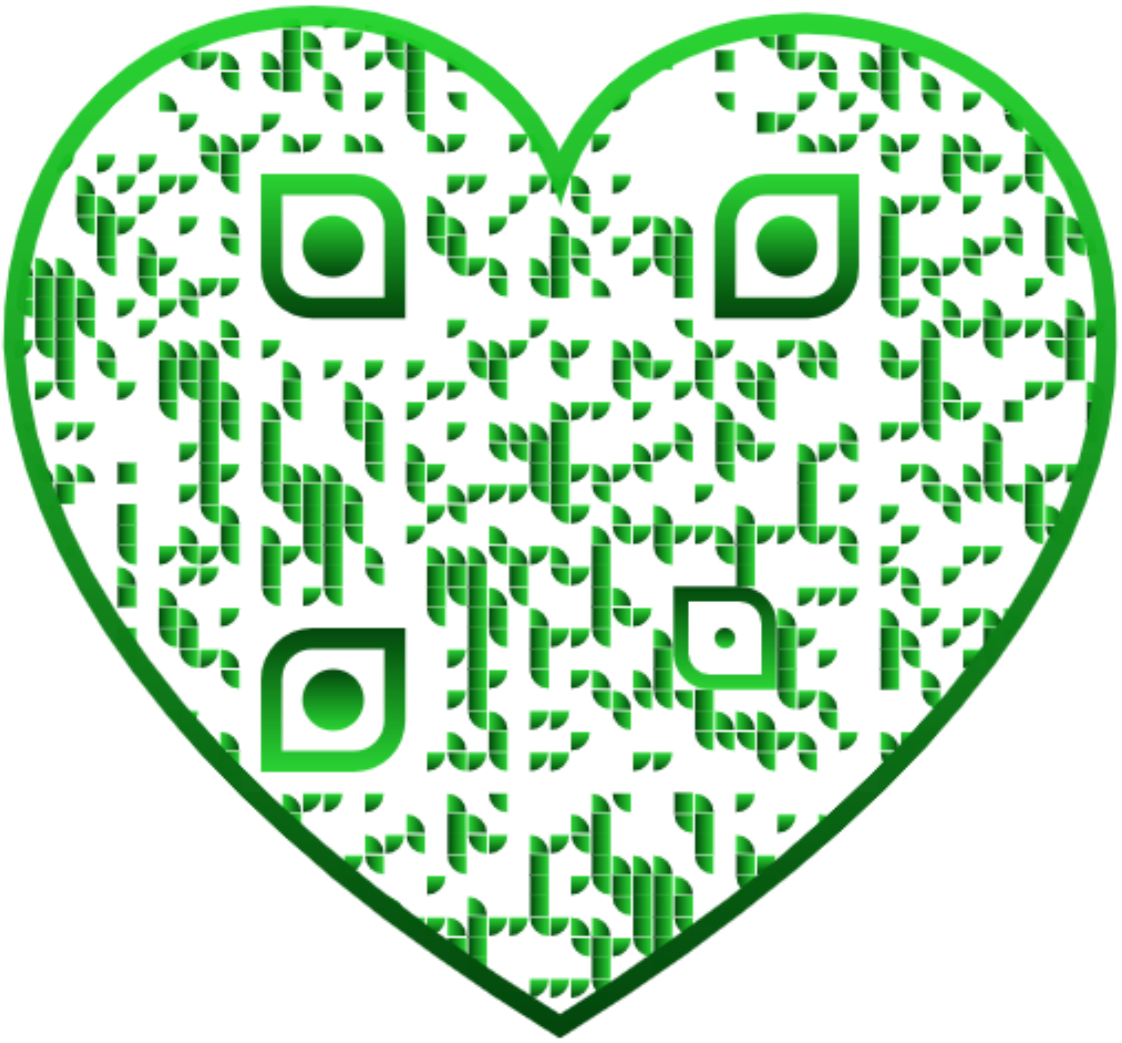

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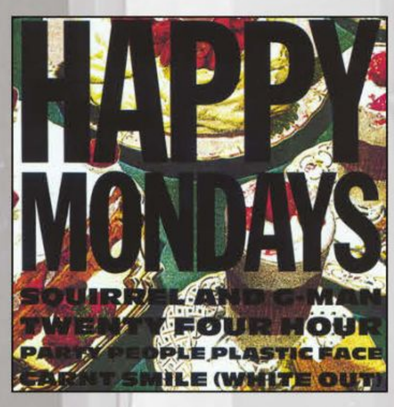

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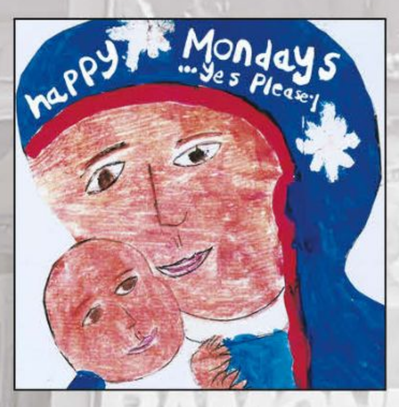

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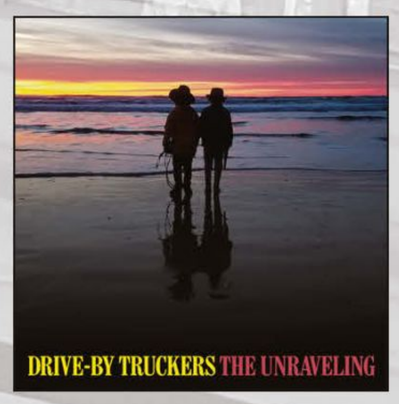

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SAVE MONEY
WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE!
TURN TO PAGE 8

Welcome...

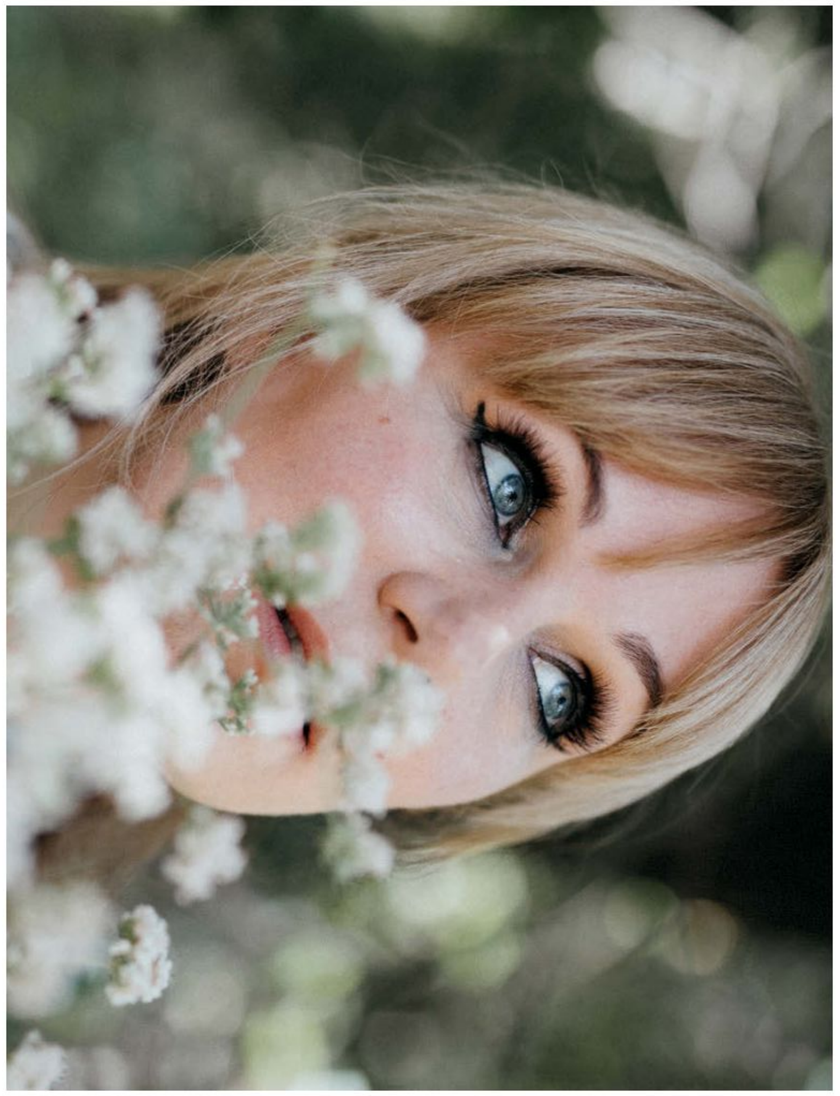
God bless the cockroaches. This issue, we feature two of rock 'n' roll's greatest survivors, keepers of the torch who've somehow endured for a combined 143 years, despite the grave punishment exacted on their own bodies, minds and souls. Firstly, Michael Stephens heads back to Birmingham in 1970 to find the famously indestructible Ozzy Osbourne and the nascent Black Sabbath more or less inventing heavy metal. The road they took was pockmarked with mishaps – accidentally recording their debut album, Tony Iommi lopping off the tips of his fingers, and the band rejecting any association with the genre they'd seemingly spawned. Regardless, they inspired thousands of bands to pledge their allegiance to the horned one. Fifty years on, despite a lifetime of the kind of wanton excess that would have put most of us in the ground long ago, and recently being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, Ozzy continues to rock. Secondly, in one of the most entertaining pieces to appear in the pages of *Long Live Vinyl*, Daniel Dylan Wray rounds up the poor, traumatised souls who accompanied Iggy Pop through his hedonistic, exploratory 1980s. Along the way, there's drugs, booze, violence, gratuitous Iggy nudity and David Bowie getting punched down a flight of stairs. "Him and Keith Richards are like the cockroaches you can't kill," says Iggy's pal and 80s bandmate Clem Burke. Of course, it's not just about the war stories. Iggy made some great and varied records post-Stooges, while from the seed Ozzy and the boys sowed 50 years ago, the metal tree sprouted in many disparate directions. After recounting the Sabbath story, Michael digs out 40 essential metal albums to add to your wants list. There's plenty of a non-metallic description going on this issue, too. We've got interviews with Johnny Marr, Supergrass, Wire and Isobel Campbell, and we look back at the album that emerged from the feuding egos of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young in March 1970, *Déjà Vu*.

Before I sign off, a quick note to look out for our next issue, on sale 6 March. It'll come complete with your free official Record Store Day guide, as well as a new-look logo. We'll still be the only magazine solely and completely dedicated to vinyl culture, the places we buy it and the kit we play it on, and we want to shout louder about it.

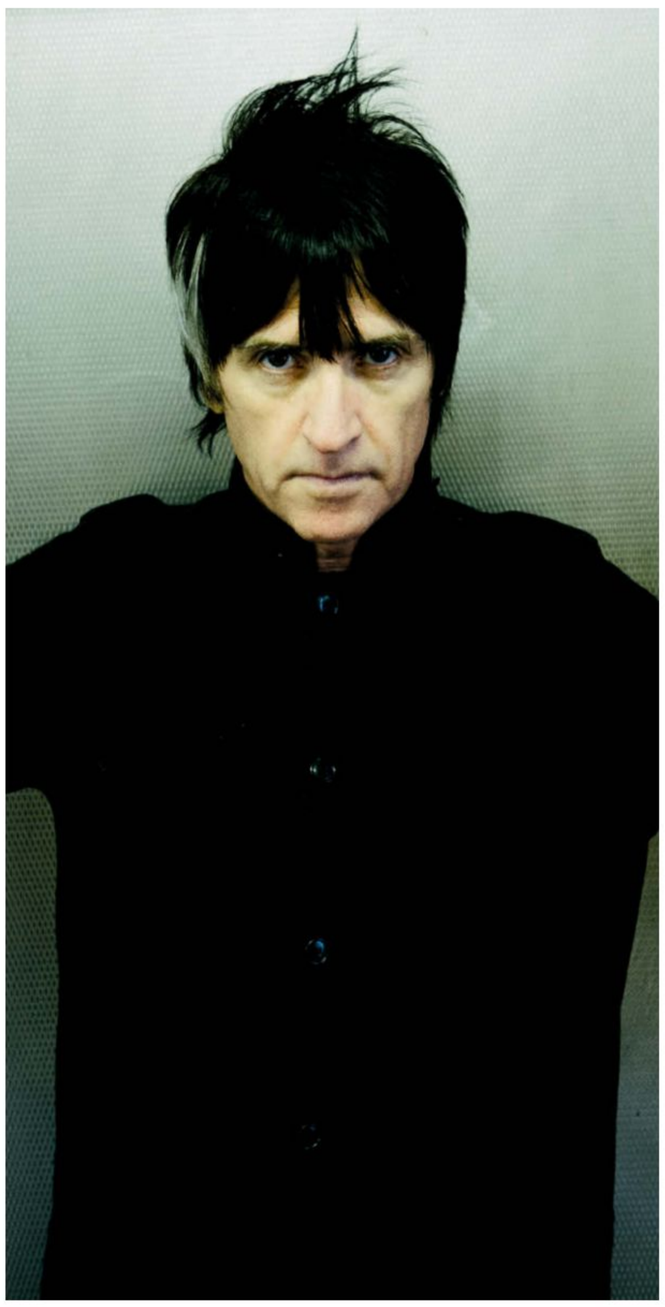
Long Live Vinyl: those who know, know it never went away…

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL



VIRGINIA TURBETT/REDFERNS/GETTY CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY GIULIANA COVELLA



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LONG LIVE VINYL

COVER STORY

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The release of the Birmingham band's debut album 50 years ago changed the face of rock

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LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team's favourite metal records

GARY WALKER
Master Of Puppets

GARY TIPP
Master Of Reality

TILDA HOWARD
Toxicity

ANDY McGREGOR
Rust In Peace

IAN PEEL
Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son

Meet our expert contributors…

SIMON RAYMONDE
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

JOHN EARLS
In addition to writing about music for *Classic Pop*, *NME* and *The Daily Star*, John Earls was editor of Teletext's Planet Sound for a decade. He also writes about football, spends too much time on Twitter and is delighted that his new hometown in Bedfordshire has a decent record shop. There's even a bus that goes to Luton Town's ground, so his life is essentially sorted.

TERI SACCONE
A veteran music journalist who grew up in New York, Teri voraciously pored over album sleeves as a child, studying studio and songwriting credits. Later, she was sucked into the vortex of the music industry while still at university. A sometimes beauty and fashion writer, besides the aural wonders of vinyl, she loves the aesthetics of album design and artwork.

DANIEL DYLAN WRAY
Daniel is a freelance writer based in Sheffield. He writes for *The Guardian*, *VICE*, *Pitchfork*, *Uncut*, *The Quietus*, *Noisey* and several others. He will be forever poor because he spends too much money on records. He can be found playing said records in Sheffield, often making small children cry by playing Einstürzende Neubauten on a Sunday afternoon in a pub.

PETE PAPHIDES
Pete bought his first record at the age of nine and has been a vinyl obsessive ever since, while writing for *Melody Maker*, *Q*, *Mojo*, *Time Out*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*. He is one of the UK's best known music journalists and has also written and presented documentaries for BBC Radio 4 and BBC 6 Music. You can catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm.

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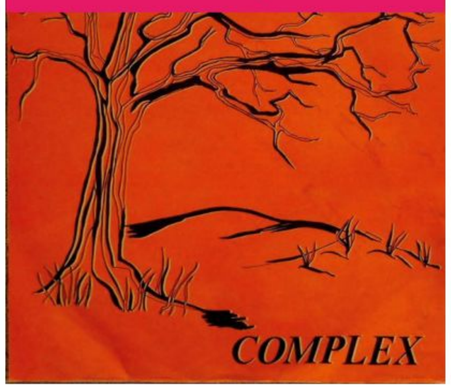

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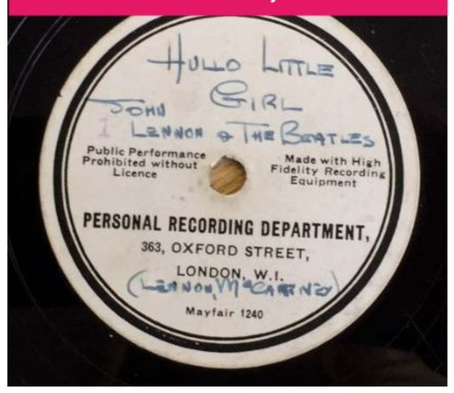

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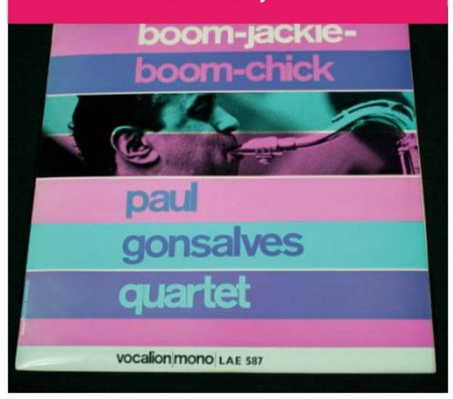

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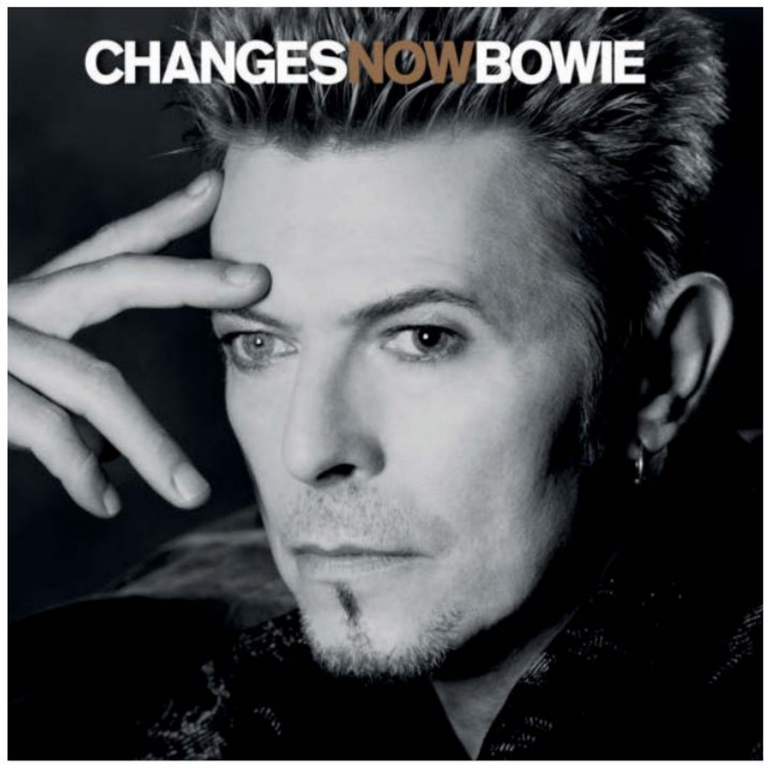
On the record

New Bowie live LP kicks off Record Store Day list

Record Store Day 2020 promises more vinyl than ever, as an album of unreleased Bowie material is unveiled



The Record Store Day 2020 ball is well and truly rolling with the news that *ChangesNowBowie*, a nine-track LP of previously unreleased material is to be issued on the big day in April.

ChangesNowBowie was a widely bootlegged largely acoustic set recorded for radio during rehearsals for Bowie's 50th birthday concert at Madison Square Garden in New York and broadcast by the BBC on 8 January, 1997. Gail Ann Dorsey (bass, vocals), Reeves Gabrels (guitars) and Mark Plati (keyboards) accompanied Bowie on the recording. Alongside the nine tracks are an interview with Mary Anne Hobbs and birthday messages from well wishers including Scott Walker, Damon Albarn and Bono.

Released by Parlophone, the limited edition LP features a cover portrait of Bowie taken by photographer Albert Watson in New York in 1996. While we were awaiting an official tracklisting as we went to press, bootlegged versions have run as follows: *The Man Who Sold The World*, *The Supermen*, *Andy Warhol*, *Repetition*, *Lady Stardust*, *White Light/White Heat*, *Shopping For Girls*, *Quicksand*, *Aladdin Sane*.

Also new for Bowie collectors is a six-track streaming-only EP titled *Is It Any Wonder*, with one track being shared each week online, starting with an acoustic version of *The Man Who Sold The World*.

This year, Record Store Day takes place on Saturday 18 April, with more than 200 independent record shops across the UK taking part. While we don't have full details of the list of exclusive releases at the time of going to press, we've been told to expect more titles than last year, when there were in excess of 500. The full list will be announced at 6pm on 5 March and we'll be back with our third annual Record Store Day guide free with issue 37 of the new-look *Long Live Vinyl*, which goes on sale 6 March. You can pre-order your copy from www.longlivevinyl.net/rsd2020.

This year's RSD Unsigned competition gives one band the chance to have 500 copies of their album pressed on vinyl. For more, go to soundperformance.co.uk.

Discogs TRENDING CHART

THE TOP 10 TRENDING VINYL RELEASES FROM THE DISCOGS COMMUNITY THIS MONTH

10 *Coloring Book* Chance The Rapper
9 *Era Vulgaris* Queens Of The Stone Age
8 *One Of The Best Yet* Gang Starr
7 *All My Heroes Are Cornballs* JPEGMAFIA
6 *The Idler Wheel…* Fiona Apple
5 *Watchmen Vol 3* Trent Reznor & Atticus Ross
4 *Acid Rap* Chance The Rapper
3 *Bitte Orca* Dirty Projectors
2 *Lucille* BB King
1 *Raising Hell* Run DMC

Official Vinyl Albums Chart

FEBRUARY 2020

10 *Why Me? Why Not.* Liam Gallagher
9 *Abbey Road* The Beatles
8 *Who* The Who
7 *Greatest Hits* Queen
6 *Nevermind* Nirvana
5 *Back To Black* Amy Winehouse
4 *Fine Line* Harry Styles
3 *When We Fall Asleep Where Do We Go?* Billie Eilish
2 *Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent* Lewis Capaldi
1 *Rumours* Fleetwood Mac

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joyfulnoiserecordings.com

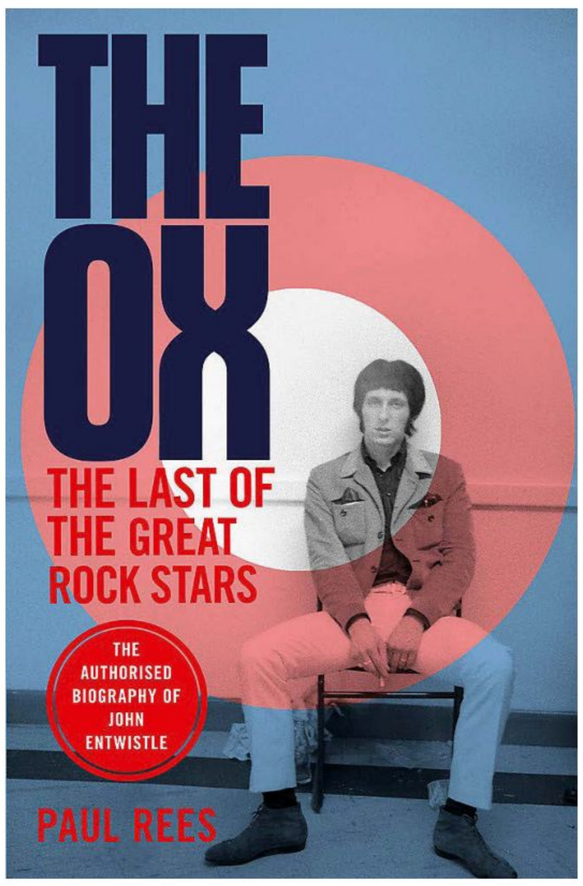
Swamp Dogg began his professional singing career as Little Jerry Williams way back in the 50s before fully embracing his psychedelic alter-ego. Now, finally, the legend has recorded the country album he has always threatened to make. He's ably assisted by Jenny Lewis, Justin Vernon and country vet John Prine, who duets with Swamp on the single *Memories*.

THE OX: THE LAST OF THE GREAT ROCK STARS

£20

littlebrown.co.uk

Not to be confused with the injury-prone Liverpool and England midfielder, *The Ox* is the definitive no-holds-barred biography of John Entwistle, The Who's bassist, who died in 2002. It draws upon John's own notes for an unfinished autobiography, personal archives and interviews with his family and friends.



THE CLASH: LONDON CALLING EXHIBITION

Free

museumoflondon.org.uk

This free exhibition draws together artefacts relating to 1979's *London Calling*, including the bass Paul Simonon smashed in the album's cover shot, guitars, lyric sheets and Joe Strummer's typewriter. It's on until March at the Museum Of London. Should you stay or go? We say, go.

The Selecter

Long Live Vinyl's essential picks for the month ahead

KANTO YU6 POWERED SPEAKERS

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kantoaudio.com

These handsome powered speakers come complete with a class D amplifier that can pump out 200 watts of power, 5.25-inch Kevlar drivers and 1-inch silk dome tweeters. You can either hook them up to your turntable or use them as wireless speakers elsewhere in the house. You'll never shower in silence again…

ROUGH TRADE PODCAST

Free

roughtrade.com

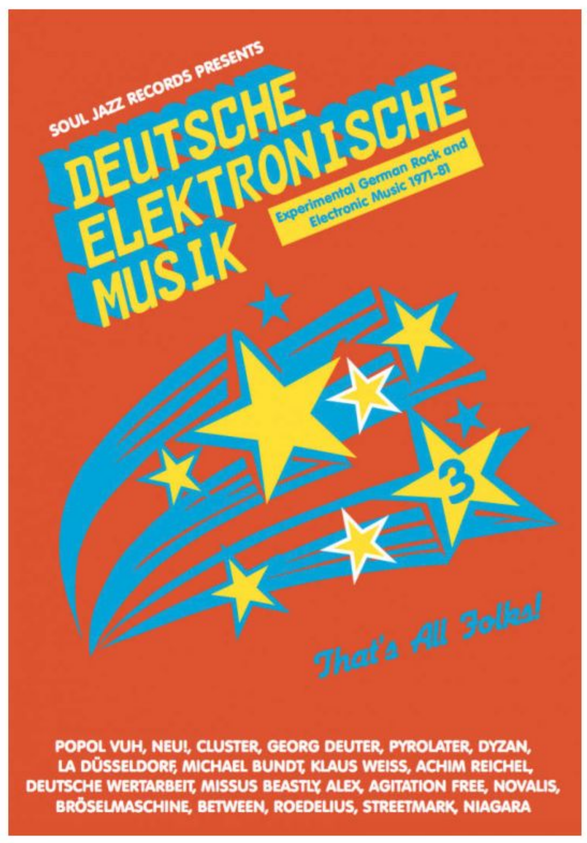
Recorded live every week at Rough Trade's London East shop, this is an excellent mix of new music, staff recommendations and band interviews. Recent episodes have included guest appearances from Fontaines D.C., The Charlatans' Tim Burgess and the venerable Iggy Pop.

DEUTSCHE ELEKTRONIC MUSIC POSTER

£3

soundsoftheuniverse.com

The discerning folks at Soul Jazz Records have made some of our favourite compilations, and this rather nice 50x70cm four-colour poster is a reproduction of the cover of Volume 3 of their definitive *Deutsche Elektronic Music* series featuring teutonic titans such as Neu!, La Dusseldorf and Popol Vuh.



Work In Progress

TJINDER SINGH, CORNERSHOP

ENGLAND IS A GARDEN **AMPLE PLAY** 6 MARCH

Our new album is... sealed, gatefold with liner notes, poster insert, double vinyl, double colour, and copper bottomed.

The sessions were... sporadic. There were quite a few layers of recording, maybe a few days recording strings, or wind instruments. Then months off until the next session, with lots of editing at home, too. I'm used to writing lyrics then building up the parts to a song. However, as my head was in repair, I had to just continue recording musical ideas as they came, which started songs off. Thus after a few years when an engineer had welded my head back together, I then had to add the lyrics. This difference meant everything was protracted. Weeks became years.

We worked with... no well known musicians deliberately. In the past, we have worked with Dan The Automator, Noel Gallagher, Otis Clay… so for a concerted effort to do things differently, this was a simple blanket statement of intent. For a choir, we used a school parents' choral; for backing vocals, we asked Valerie Etienne, a mother from my son's local school, to sing for us. It turned out she was more professional than a parents' evening would suggest.

We used... either my studio in London or West Orange Studios, Preston. The engineer at the latter is Alan Gregson. We have worked with him since we were studying at Preston Polytechnic, and over time he has become a band member. By the time the songs were edited, West Orange Studios had moved from Preston to Poitiers, so we mixed the tracks in France.

We were inspired... by nothing but the idea of taking each song through to a satisfying finish. We hardly listened to much other music, did not allow anyone to hear work in progress. We just chipped ahead at seemingly no pace.

We learnt... that even while being intent on finishing an album that was slowly killing us, being anti-Brexit was still more uppermost on our mind. What a honeycomb England is breaking, and I do mean England.

Playing these songs live... we have stopped playing live, keep our carbon footprint as small as a bird, and are happy to leave it like that.

You'd be surprised to know that... despite the unmitigating upbeat nature of the album, there was a lot going on behind the scenes. Marie Remy, our label manager, thought it would never get finished, but also pushed us to just book the next studio and move it on. Then another few months of editing ensued. Given this time, we took the time to put hidden parts into every song. These will not always be instantly seen and heard, but will come out after many plays, as that is how the human ear works, and every garden.

Lost Shops

#9 STERNS, LONDON

Situated behind Warren Street Station, Sterns was the foremost African music shop in Europe. Initially a backroom in Stern's electrical goods shop on Tottenham Court Road, it seems Mr Stern realised that the African students at SOAS university were struggling to get music from home. This was the 1950s, and so he began selling African 78s, then 45s, then LPs – often buying suitcase loads from visitors – and, by the 70s, Sterns had such a reputation Eno, John Peel and Charlie Gillett were customers. In 1983, the lease ran out and Stern retired. Regulars Robert Urbanus, Don Bayramian and Charles Easmon, pooled together to buy the name and stock, relocating nearby. This was perfect timing as the world music boom was under way and Sterns became a record label (Salif Keita's *Soro* was their biggest seller) and booking agent. The record shop remained a blast of colourful noise with a huge selection of African and Latin albums and became one of the first to house a café. I found albums here that I'd never seen before and would often hang around to chat with other aficionados. By the 90s, Sterns was largely CD-oriented, yet CD burners meant their new releases were being bootlegged internationally. Downloading hit hard and the shop closed in 2009, Stern's existing today solely as a record label. *Garth Cartwright*

MARIE REMY

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

Vaughan Oliver created a number of memorable sleeves for Cocteau Twins. Simon shares his memories of 4AD's celebrated designer, who died in December

The arrival of Apple Macintosh and PCs in the analogue recording studios of the 1990s was initially embraced a bit like VAR has been in the football world. In other words, with suspicion and dislike. But like all things new and unknown, early adopters quickly showed the potential, and before long most studios, even if they fought it to start with, began shifting towards a more digital-savvy approach. In the graphic design universe, however, it seemed that soon after the candy-coloured iMacs were launched in 1998, every designer had one.

All but Vaughan Oliver that is. Aged just 62, Vaughan passed away on 29 December, and it is my pleasure to share some personal thoughts on working with him both during my days with Cocteau Twins and since running Bella Union.

The maverick artist is as synonymous with the indie giant 4AD as some of the bands themselves. His designs for the label throughout the 80s and 90s were as iconic as Peter Saville's were for Factory, and during those final two decades of the 20th Century, perhaps only Germany's ECM Records had such a distinctive in-house style. If you are not aware of Oliver's work, start out looking at his designs for Lush, The Wolfgang Press, Colourbox, This Mortal Coil, the Pixies,Throwing Muses and my own band, Cocteau Twins.

One great difference, to my mind, was that Vaughan's work was always the perfect visual companion to the aural delights within the sleeve. Until much much later, Vaughan also preferred the traditional draughtsman's board, using it almost like a bedroom wall to pin his ideas onto, where he could shuffle them around, overlaying and overlapping bits of paper and photographs until his mind's eye was in focus.

Working with him on Cocteau Twins wasn't always easy, but then everyone said that. Label, writers, promoters, all found us a bit of a challenge, but Vaughan was always trying to find the perfect solution and he did so with great humour and no end of patience. And he truly LISTENED to the music intently until the appropriate vision came to him. The suggestion we didn't use him that much for our artwork is woefully inaccurate. He designed SIX of our album sleeves, EIGHT 12" EPs and numerous compilations during our time at 4AD.

For the other artists on the label, he was able to use his dark humour and wicked eye for controversy, even when the hope may have been to have a commercial hit! Following the success of MARRS' *Pump Up The Volume*, the label saw from the swell of popularity accompanying the Pixies that here was a band that could also have a Top 20 single, but Vaughan was not one for seeking lazy compromises.

Thankfully, I know that singer Charles was very open to his ideas and whether it was a crying baby, a monkey, a man with a back as hairy as a Vivienne Westwood mohair jumper, or a flamenco dancer naked from the waist up, his sleeves for the Pixies are among his best work for 4AD.

His penchant for the subversive wasn't only reserved for the Pixies, and while at first glimpse his sleeve for Ultra Vivid Scene's debut single *She Screamed* seemed innocuous enough, the eagle-eyed among you might spot a row of tiny clitorises he used from a set of centrefolds from porn mag *Hustler*. Quite literally, for Vaughan the devil was in the detail.

His work was always the perfect companion to the aural delights within the sleeve

Many years later, I finished a melancholic dreamy sort of folk record with my ex-girlfriend Stephanie Dosen. We called ourselves Snowbird and I thought Vaughan would be the perfect art director for the LP sleeve. He asked for demos or early mixes so he could get some inspiration for the project. After a few weeks, he called to say he loved it, had some ideas and would like to come up to the Bella Union offices to show me. We spent our first hour together talking football – he had been taking his FA coaching badges – mostly about his beloved Sunderland AFC and my team Spurs, and as supporters of teams who are perennial under-achievers we both had a lot to laugh about.

He soon began to show me his sketches and they were so beautiful, I was really quite moved by the depth of his ideas. It remains one of my favourite sleeves in the 22 years of running Bella Union. It is simple and elegant, and elevates the music it surrounds. The best album sleeves get picked up in the record browsers regardless of the band on the vinyl, and for sure many 4AD artists from the 80s and 90s were bought for the same reason.

Roger Dean had a similar effect on record buyers in the 1970s, and if there is a wonder why the 2000s were lacking in a similar set of iconic sleeve designers, surely the coma that affected vinyl production until recent years can explain that. Regardless, the artist whose work defined an era and had a long-lasting influence on both vinyl AND book cover design, Vaughan Oliver was a one-off who will be sorely missed by his wife and children, and by all the millions of people who have his artwork scattered throughout their record collections, who have spent hours poring over his intricate and sumptuous designs.

The Big Question

Addressing Vinyl's Most Pressing Issues

Can you still bag charity-shop bargains?

The pricing policy in charity shops has changed over recent years, but can thrifty vinyl collectors still find the treasure we seek?

There was a time, not so long ago, when not only were all the streets paved with gold, but the charity shops were piled high to the rafters with all different types of collectable vinyl at giveaway prices. Those times are gone, and with vinyl's resurgence the charity shops have wised up, but can they still be a good source for a bargain?

Long Live Vinyl talked to Rowland Cleverley, a volunteer at Oxfam in its Stony Stratford and Olney shops, who is the man in charge of pricing the records to sell them on. We also chatted to Rebecca Garnham, author of the popular online blog CarBoot VinylDiaries, a music-obsessive who loves hunting down vinyl bargains at car boot sales and charity shops.

Rebecca takes the first stab at answering the question above: "Although times are much harder these days, I'd still say 'definitely, yes'. I find that the key is to visit often, and not to bother with those in large towns with high footfall. Small, out-of-the-way independent charity shops seem the best for good stuff at bargain prices, and persistence does pay off. You've got to be in it to win it, you might say."

Although coming from a different perspective, Rowland, who once sold a mono pressing of *Please Please Me* on the Parlophone black/gold label for £310, is in agreement: "I still pick up the occasional bargain, so the answer has to be 'yes'. Clearly, from what I see on Twitter, many diggers pick up some absolute 'steals' from charity shops. In my experience, apart from car boot sales, these days charity shops are the only places where you can pick up a bargain."

THE PRICE ISN'T RIGHT

Although the value and collectability of the albums donated to charity shops these days is largely diminished, a lot depends on a store's individual pricing policy, which can be, let's say, inconsistent. It's an issue that rankles Rebecca.

"Pricing in charity shops is generally all over the place, and none of the ones I frequent have anything like a grading system! Obviously, some shop managers have vaguely heard something about vinyl being popular at the moment, but few have the knowledge to translate this into realistic pricing, often getting their prices from eBay's 'highest sold' rather than median items, and often seemingly from out of thin air."

Charity shops remain a place for a vinyl bargain (in theory)

Of course, we don't begrudge worthy causes benefiting, and there are pricing exceptions, as Rebecca acknowledges. Rowland is particularly thorough when pricing records to sell. "My method, and that of some other sellers in Oxfam," he says, "is to be cheaper than anything being sold online, usually on Discogs and eBay, as long as historical 'sold' prices justify the price.

"For the bulk of records, I'll go straight to Discogs. I'll then filter it down to the exact same record from UK sellers, if possible, and find the cheapest for a record in the same condition or better. This price is my starting point. I will then look at the 'sold' data for this release to check that this price is justified."

With such precision, a decent charity shop vinyl section could be regarded as a self-contained store. Rowland agrees: "I regard the vinyl section in one of the shops I volunteer in as a mini-record shop." Rebecca's all for it, too: "A well-curated, carefully graded and realistically priced music section in a charity shop would be a very nice thing, and worth slightly higher prices. It's an approach that would be very attractive to record buyers. It would certainly get me in the door."

The Completist

PETE PAPHIDES

As every self-effacing male instinctively knows, the quickest route to a woman's heart is through a mixtape. Music transferred from vinyl to audio cassette is truly the food of love

Assuming my wife doesn't come to her senses between the completion of this column and its publication, this Valentine's Day will also mark 25 years since we decided to go steady as a couple. I'd like to be able to say that I won her over by the sheer force of my personality, but if you've met me and you've met her, you'll know better.

She was clever, funny, kind, beautiful and successful; I was reasonably tidy, moderately punctual, could do a fair Neil Kinnock impersonation and, um, that's about it. We were best friends. But getting from the friend zone to the next stage is like getting from the IKEA showroom to the home furnishings section. It has been done, but it takes forever and you might lose the will to live and settle for someone far less exciting along the way, if only because they might actually know the way out of there.

Sometimes though, a sliver of opportunity might present itself and, if the thought of being with that person makes you giddy with excitement, fatalism swiftly gives way to hope. That's how it was on the evening of Friday February 10th 1995 at Cate's flat, waiting for our takeaways to arrive. She asked me if I was attending a Boo Radleys playback the following week. I told her I'd be away – I was owed two weeks' holiday leave which I had to take before the end of February. I'd decided to rent a car, drive north and just see where I ended up.

"Wow!" she replied, "Sounds like my dream holiday. If I could drive, that's what I'd do."

Before I realised what I was about to say – "You can come with me if you like!" – I'd already said it. "Really?!" she said, "Do you mean it?" I nodded. She screamed with delight. And we hugged. In the way that best mates do.

It could have stayed like that and it would have been fine. And yet, some underlying imperative propelled me into a state of emergency. Our curries arrived and once we ate them, I got the bus home and immediately starting pulling records off my shelves, not stopping until I had 25 piles, each corresponding to the mixtape I would make out of them. One pile for moody night driving; one full of life-affirming power pop for sunny coastal drives; a stack of ethereal post-punk classics in case we got as far as the panoramic mountainous vistas of the Scottish highlands. And so on.

Though I didn't articulate it to myself at this point, it seems clear to me now what I was doing. In the animal kingdom, peacocks use their outrageously patterned plumage to attract the opposite sex; lions deploy their regal manes to impress the lady-lions. After a weekend of non-stop taping, shuttling between the music centre in the front room and the one in the kitchen, all I had to call upon was a rental car and a glove compartment full of tapes.

Thirty-six hours later, between Scarborough and Edinburgh, after a thrillingly hairy stretch of road listening to a four-track sampler of Radiohead's yet-to-be-released *The Bends*, the nature of our friendship had somewhat altered. Perhaps she would have fallen in love with me in spite rather than because of all this.

Maybe I'm giving just a bit too much credit to the admittedly terrific sequencing decision which saw Slowdive's *Catch The Breeze* go into Curve's *I Speak Your Every Word* and then into Ride's *Unfamiliar* as the Forth Bridge reared up over the skyline at dusk. I would like to think so. Because if the music really was the decisive factor, the catalyst to which the existence of our two daughters can be attributed, that suggests that I used music to trigger a slightly less creepy Stockholm Syndrome, like a sort of non-murderous Charles Manson with the physique and interpersonal skills of The Great Soprendo.

All I had to call upon was a rental car and a glove compartment full of tapes

On the second week, having made it up as far as Ullapool, we took a circuitous route back via Wales. We had phoned ahead and booked a seafront room in Aberystwyth. We were still on the road at 1am, driving towards a silver moon silhouetting the trees over the undulating twists and turns of West Wales. Exactly 45 minutes to go. I asked Cate if she could look in the glove compartment and pull out one of the few pre-recorded tapes in there, *This Is The Sea* by The Waterboys.

Sometimes, you play the right album at the right time in the right place and suddenly you're too scared to look in the rear view mirror in case you see God sitting in the back. It started with *Don't Bang The Drum*, thundering out of the speakers as we tore through the glistening country lanes of Dyfed – the elemental synergy of scenery and song. And it ended as we reached our destination, the serene seafront of Aberystwyth twinkling invitingly after the breathtaking scenery that preceded it. The final song, the title track, dissipated from a hurricane to a sea breeze with Mike Scott singing, "Behold… the… sea."

She still mentions that evening from time to time. I have to stop myself from reminding her that it wasn't me who actually made the record. But then why would I tempt fate? That night, music was the Cyrano de Bergerac to my Christian de Neuvillette. Perhaps it still is. And that's why, 25 years later, I don't dare turn it off.

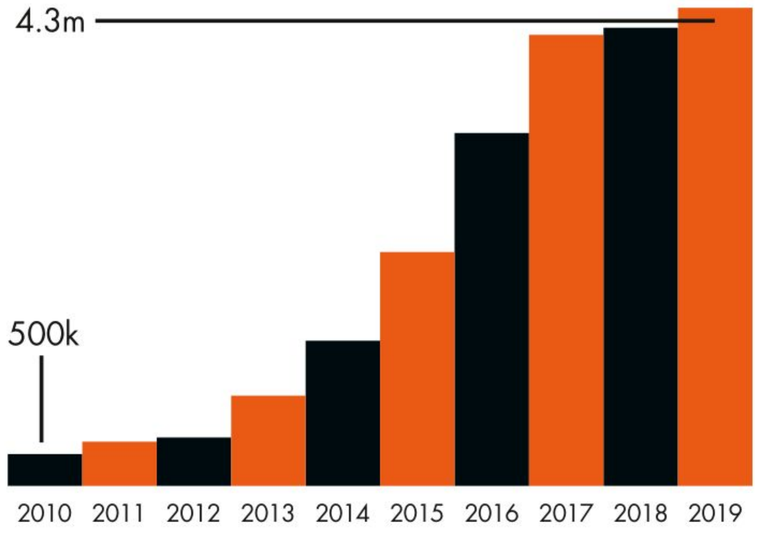
Pete Paphides is a music journalist, record collector and broadcaster. Catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm

Still growing

UK vinyl sales rise for 12th consecutive year

Official figures released by record labels' association the BPI show that 2019 marked a 12th consecutive year of growth in the sales of vinyl in the UK. Liam Gallagher's *Why Me? Why Not.* was the most in-demand title, selling over 29,000 copies. 2019's Top 10 albums include high-profile reissues such as The Beatles' *Abbey Road* and Joy Division's anniversary reissue of *Unknown Pleasures*.

Predictably, the Top 10 was also blessed with the continued presence of uber-heritage albums Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* and Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* (with the former selling more than 25,000 copies on vinyl in 2019). Vinyl albums now account for one in every eight LPs bought, with 4.3 million purchased in 2019, an increase of 4.1 per cent on the previous year and a rise of over 2,000 per cent on the format's low point in 2007. When asked, Vanessa Higgins, CEO of Regent Street Records, and an independent member of the BPI Council, said: "It's wonderful to see the continued growth of vinyl, which shows fans still love a physical, tangible music artefact in their hands. Personally, I would love to see a rebirth in the British manufacture of these products, supported by modern technology and government, to match the rediscovered UK physical market and the untapped potential that still lies there."



20,000

The price in dollars a UK mono copy of the 1964 *Beatles For Sale* album with jacket signed by all four band members went for in a recent Heritage Auctions sale.

THE SECRET SEVEN

Details of the final Secret 7 exhibition at London's NOW Gallery have been announced. 700 different artists have created covers for 7 different 7"s, with 100 copies of each being pressed and sold for £70 each. Proceeds go to Help Refugees. The sale begins on 31 May. Go to www.secret-7.com for more information.

4 OF A KIND... Home furnishings

TEARS FOR FEARS
SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR
The dysfunctional West Country pop duo celebrate an XL version of one of the most basic pieces of furniture on their multi-platinum second album.

PALE FOUNTAINS
FROM ACROSS THE KITCHEN TABLE
Michael Head's outfit released two studio albums including this ode to the four-legged level surface provided for eating your breakfast on.

BARRY ADAMSON
STRANGER ON THE SOFA
The former Magazine member and Bad Seeds bassist's atmospheric album from 2006 marks the occasion someone he didn't know sat on his long, upholstered seat.

MODEST MOUSE
LAMPSHADES ON FIRE
The US rockers, who are lucky enough to count Johnny Marr among their alumni, pay tribute to flammable lightbulb covers on their 2014 single.

Coming Soon...

HERE'S OUR PICK OF THE NEW VINYL RELEASES

14 FEBRUARY
Huey Lewis & The News, *Weather* (BMG); Nathaniel Rateliff, *And It's Still Alright* (UMC); Tame Impala, *The Slow Rush* (UMC)

21 FEBRUARY
Greg Dulli, *Random Desire* (BMG); Grimes, *Miss_ Anthrop0cene* (4AD); Guided By Voices, *Surrender Your Poppy Field* (GBV Inc); Humanist, *Humanist* (Ignition); Lanterns On The Lake, *Spook The Herd* (Bella Union); Lee Ranaldo & Raul Refree, *Names Of North End Women* (Mute); Ozzy Osbourne, *Ordinary Man* (Epic); The 1975, *Notes On A Conditional Form* (Polydor)

28 FEBRUARY
Gigi Masin, *Calypso* (Apollo Records); Caribou, *Suddenly* (Merge); Wrangler, *How To Start A Revolution* (Bella Union)

6 MARCH
Cornershop, *England Is A Garden* (Ample Play); Swamp Dogg, *Sorry You Couldn't Make It* (Joyful Noise); U.S. Girls, *Heavy Eyes* (4AD)

13 MARCH
Circa Waves, *Happy Sad* (Prolifica); Deap Lips, *Deap Lips* (Cooking Vinyl); The Districts, *You Know I'm Not Going Anywhere* (Fat Possum)

20 MARCH
Baxter Dury, *The Night Chancers* (Heavenly)

27 MARCH
The Orb, *Abolition Of The Royal Familia* (Cooking Vinyl); Waxahatchee, *Saint Cloud* (Merge); Cable Ties, *Far Enough* (Merge); Margaret Glaspy, *Devotion* (PIAS)

IAN PEEL'S

THE ART OF THE 12"

New year, new column, new theme. New passion! In the first of a new series, Ian dives deep into his first and truest love in the world of vinyl: 1980s 12" singles

Eighties 12" singles. I've been obsessed with them for as long as I can remember. They're the one part of my record collection that passes the house fire test. If my house was burning down and there was only time to save one shelf of records, it would be my eighties 12"s.

How did this journey begin? I remember it quite vividly. March 1984 and I went into a branch of an indie chain store, Music Market. Saturday morning and I had money in my pocket ready to spend on new music. Before I even got there, I'd narrowed my purchase down to one of two cutting-edge (or so they seemed at the time) pop albums on cassette. I was going for either Nik Kershaw's *Human Racing*, or Howard Jones' *Human's Lib*.

How wrong I was! As soon as I walked into the store, I abandoned that plan completely when I spotted they had just a few copies of one of the week's most talked-about releases. The US 12" remix of Thompson Twins' *You Take Me Up*. Not the standard 12" single version but a 'Strictly Limited Edition' variant with unique artwork. Kershaw and Jones didn't get a look in and the Twins catapulted me into my vinyl 'first love'.

This release sums up many of the things I love about the format. Like the way Extended remixes, edits and special versions were created especially for 12". If the 12" didn't exist, then there is a whole area of eighties music that simply wouldn't exist either. Then there's also the packaging and artwork. All of which was often designed specifically for the 12" (as opposed to being just enlarged versions of 7" singles).

I also love that the eighties 12" is one of the most contentious and rule-breaking formats in music history. Like when Paul Hardcastle kept creating incredible new 12"s of his May 1985 No. 1 hit *19*, partly because he was at the vanguard of sampling and on a creative high, but also because he wanted as many products on the market as possible to keep Duran Duran's rival single *A View To A Kill* off the No. 1 spot. And it worked!

Or when Frankie Goes To Hollywood released *Relax*, firstly as a staggeringly long (and largely improvised) 16-minute Sex mix and then across at least five further 12"s.

Its follow-up single, *Two Tribes*, spawned an equally-contentious 12", which has since featured in a number of Cold War documentaries as a result of its inclusion of the English government's Protect And Survive public safety warnings on how to prepare for a nuclear attack.

Yes, punk has the 7" single. Prog has the gatefold double LP. Reggae has the dubplate. Psych has the private pressing. And new wave can lay claim to coloured vinyl. But, for me, you couldn't ask for a more captivating fusion of message and medium than the eighties 12" single.

They're a genre in themselves, and it's something that I can't wait to take a deep dive into on this page across the course of 2020.

You can't get a more captivating fusion of message and medium than an eighties' 12"

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site

AVXLIVE.ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open https://avxlive.icu

THE VINYLIST DAVE BRITTON

Endtroducing a serious DJ Shadow collector…

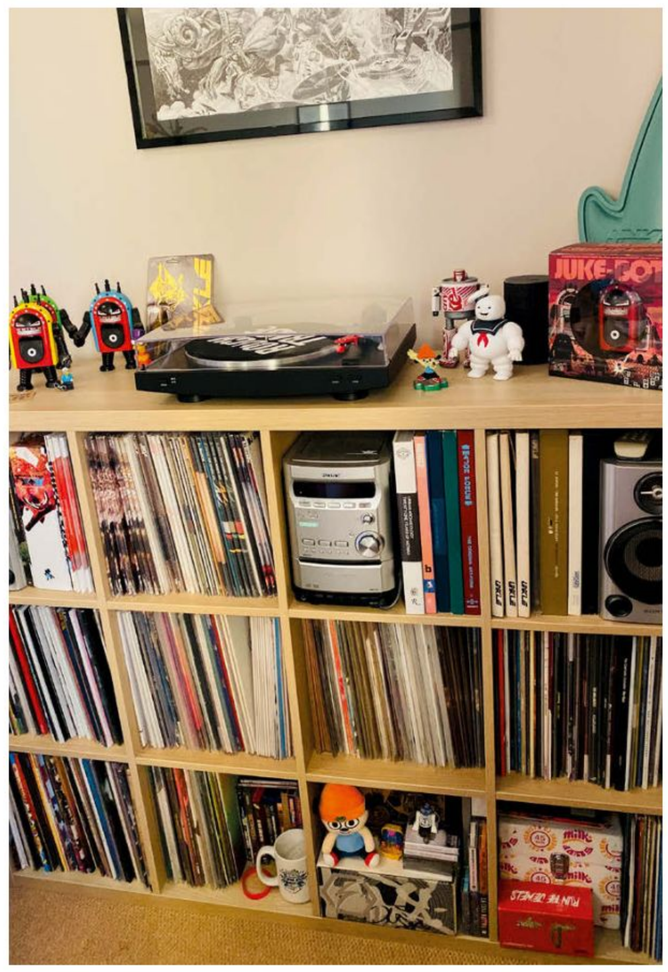
What was the first record you bought?
"As a child, I was bought the 7" of Partners In Kryme's *Turtle Power* from the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Movie*. My first 12" was DJ Shadow's *Endtroducing…..* I saw a signed copy on eBay and had left someone in charge of bidding while I was at work. They texted to say that they had accidentally bid £4,000 rather than £40. That was a pretty nervy shift waiting to see how much it was going to cost!"

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"My music tastes are varied, I enjoy all sorts from metal right through to country. However, I enjoy hip-hop, electronic and rock the most. At the moment, in addition to DJ Shadow, I am listening to a lot of Nils Frahm, The Cinematic Orchestra and Nick Cave. I am also a huge fan of Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin."

How many records do you have?
"I have 1,320 items listed on my Discogs, but I know there are at least 300 CDs that I have not added to my collection. I also have a few DJ Shadow releases that I have not yet got around to adding to the Discogs database. My Shadow collection shows I have 663 items – I have 35 copies of *Endtroducing….*!"

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"It's difficult to value some items, as they don't have any sales history, other than when I bought them. But I believe my copies of DJ Shadow singles *Enuff*, *3 Freaks* and *Enuff/ This Time* remixes are the most valuable. 100 copies of each of these three singles were hand stencilled by the Artist Paul Insect and have been known to sell for over £250."

What's the holy grail record that you'd most like to own?
"There are many that I once called a Grail, including DJ Shadow's *3 Freaks*. However, I have been able to find most of these. There are Shadow demo tapes, which without a lottery win, will probably always evade me, but there's one I may still find, Shadow's 12" of DJ Hero Mixes *Uncharted*.

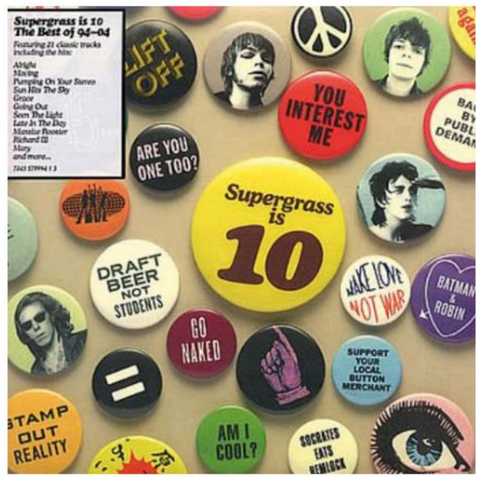


What's your listening setup?
"Whenever people ask me that question, for over a year now, I've been saying that I am between setups. However, for now, I play and keep my records in the lounge, so space is pretty much at a premium. So I just have my Audio Technica AT-LP3 and a 'vintage' Sony hi-fi, which I have had for over 20 years."

MOST VALUABLE VINYL

BLACK SABBATH
MASTER OF REALITY
Rare 1971 UK first pressing 8-track vinyl LP on an inverted black 'swirl' label with machine-stamped 1Y1/2Y1 matrices and an inverted 'swirl' die-cut inner. Fully laminated and embossed box picture sleeve complete with the incredibly rare fold-out poster!
£695

WIRE
154
Rare 1979 UK 13-track LP, the third album from the English post-punk band, complete with limited edition bonus 4-track 7" EP featuring *Song I*, *Get Down [Parts I & II]*, *Let's Panic Later* and *Small Electric Piece*. Housed in picture sleeve with original lyric inner SHSP4105.
£85



SUPERGRASS
SUPERGRASS IS 10
Best Of 94-04. Original 2004 UK limited edition double 10" LP pressed on clear vinyl featuring 21 classic tracks, including *Alright*, *Caught By The Fuzz*, *Richard III*, *Pumping On Your Stereo* and *Late In The Day*. Hype-stickered gatefold picture sleeve with tracklisting-printed inners. **£95**

THE SMITHS
WILLIAM IT WAS REALLY NOTHING
Rare 1984 German 3-track 12" maxi-single on purple marbled vinyl, including *Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want* and *How Soon Is Now?* Picture sleeve has 'Platte in mehrfarbigem Vinyl' printed circular flash. INT125.219. **£85**

Now Spinning

Here's what's been revolving on our turntable this issue, while we were nursing a can of Heathen from Northern Monk, a bold yet balanced India Pale Ale

Diamond Hoo Ha Man **Supergrass** (BMG)
Stranger Than Fiction **Moses Boyd** (Exodus)
Lost In Yesterday **Tame Impala** (Fiction)
Get The Devil Out **Nadia Reid** (Spacebomb)
Crimson Tide **Destroyer** (Dead Oceans)
Get Over You **The Undertones** (BMG)
Babies In Cages **Drive-By Truckers** (ATO)
Vultures **Isobel Campbell** (Cooking Vinyl)
Kisses On The Wind **Neneh Cherry** (UMC/Virgin)
Kuff Dam **Happy Mondays** (London)
Electronic **Patience Of A Saint** (Rhino)
Every Atom **Lanterns On The Lake** (Bella Union)

Band Of Brothers

A comprehensive 10LP and 5CD Allman Brothers boxset arrives later this month, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the band's formation. It features classic material, live performances, rarities and seven previously unreleased tracks – including the Southern rock legends' first recording, the original 1969 demo of *Trouble No More*. The demo, for the band's debut album, opens disc one of the huge collection of the same name, featuring 61 tracks, released on 28 February via Island Mercury/UMC. The set is divided into the five distinct eras of the band and has been produced by Allman Brothers Band historians Bill Levenson, John Lynskey and Kirk West.
Also inside the wood-veneer wrapped slipcase is a 56-page book that includes a 9,000-word essay on the band by John Lynskey.

TOP DECK

Audio-Technica has unveiled details of its new "premium" turntable, the AT-LPW50PB. Previewed at the CES exhibition in Las Vegas, the deck is seen as AT's first foray into the mid-price market dominated by the likes of Rega. Featuring an AT-VM95E cartridge, it retails at £379.

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HONEY HARPER

The rising star discusses his bold and beautiful debut and his vision for cosmic country

Every so often, a new artist emerges, seemingly out of nowhere, fully formed. Honey Harper is one such example. His achingly beautiful, expansive yet understated debut is a confidently realised proposition. Offering his take on 'universal country', *Starmaker* has classic written all over it.

Honey Harper is the alter-ego of Will Fussell, who grew up in Atlanta before more recently relocating to London. Digging deeper, there's a journey that took him from his swirly shoegaze outfit Mood Rings via the Euro pop of Promise Keeper to arrive at the point he is at now. So far removed are they in sound and aesthetic that never in a million years would you consider all three to be the product of the same artist. But far from simply trying on another costume to see how it fits, it's clear Honey Harper is what he was destined to become all along. It has taken him back to his roots.

Fussell grew up in the American south, surrounded by country music. "My dad was an Elvis impersonator," he tells us. In his youth, he consciously ditched his rich southern accent and, in hindsight, it seems his formative musical ventures were similar attempts to break free from that heritage. Finally, he has chosen to embrace it. Vocals, presented with a light twang that breaks on delivery, sit front and centre, where in previous projects they were hidden behind layers of reverb or snappy production.

The idea of commercial country music can conjure up certain connotations of kitschness. Harper both conforms to the imagery (Stetson, promo video shot on a dusty Texan Wild West movie set) and challenges it. His notion of 'cosmic country' draws upon the heritage, then subtly twists it – both Gram Parsons and Spiritualized are listed among his influences. It's not a radical departure, but as he explains, "I was keen to make a record of its time, clearly rooted in 2020." Opener *Green Shadow*s sets the tone, with its vocoder-laden intro and spacey atmospherics.

Starmaker doesn't jump out screaming for your attention, rather its beauty lies in its restraint. It's one of those albums that creeps up on you when you least expect it, then sinks its tendrils in. A couple of tracks were cut with Sébastien Tellier, "in the same Paris studio where Paul Simon recorded *Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard*." Its centrepiece, *Suzuki Dreams*, was Harper's attempt at a vintage Disney score. It starts off with luscious sweeping strings, courtesy of the Hungarian Studio Orchestra. Yet for all its grandeur, it manages to remain intimate. *Something Relative* is equally affecting, a lament on a friend lost to an overdose.

Softly spoken and thoughtful in responses, Harper's also ambitious. He has already plotted out the aesthetic for album number two, and with a batch of tracks already written, he hopes to have it recorded before the first is released. In fact, he's soon heading off to LA "to work with a cool group of musicians" to start making that a reality.

A running theme throughout *Starmaker* is the pursuit of success and fame. How one defines success is of course highly subjective. Whether it brings him fame remains to be seen. But as a body of work, it is already a triumph. **Felix Rowe**

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CRATE DIGGING WITH...
CHALI 2NA

The American rapper and respected visual artist blazed a trail as a founding member of Jurassic 5. Here, he puts forward his all-time top 10 albums

RUN-D.M.C
TOUGHER THAN LEATHER
"Run-D.M.C solidified my love of the back and forth routines of old. Although the routine of back-and-forth rap was done to perfection by The Cold Crush Brothers and The Furious Five, Run-D.M.C brought this style to the masses of the world."

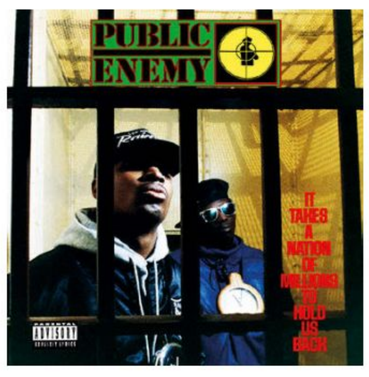
LL COOL J
RADIO
"This album was an introduction to the beast known as LL Cool J. He made me see that it wasn't about age more than it was about skill and confidence. Maximum respect to James Todd Smith."

BEASTIE BOYS
LICENSED TO ILL
"The Beastie Boys are where punk rock and rap melted together very well. *Licensed To Ill* not only crossed colour lines, but genre barriers as well. Arguably one of the most innovative rap albums to date."

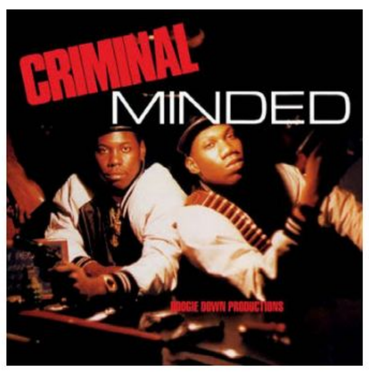
ERIC B. & RAKIM
PAID IN FULL
"Eric B. and Rakim were like aliens that came to earth to teach a new way of thought..."

CHILL ROB G
RIDE THE RHYTHM
"Chill Rob G has to be one of the greatest MCs of all time. His lyrical prowess and wordsmith ability puts him among the greats! Not to mention the production by The 45 King. Before he would go on to create masterpieces with people like Queen Latifah, he was standing firm with Chill Rob G."

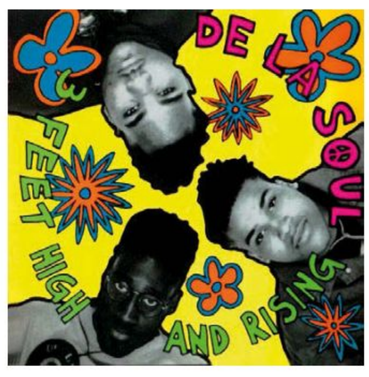
BIG DADDY KANE
LONG LIVE THE KANE
"Big Daddy Kane is not only one of the top five lyricists to date, but he is also one of the greatest showmen to grace the stage still to this day. Any time you watch him or listen to him, it's as if he's either teaching a class or preaching a funeral."



PUBLIC ENEMY
IT TAKES A NATION OF MILLIONS TO HOLD US BACK
"Chuck D's father figure voice and the lessons taught through his message in his music made me search for my identity, my history and my place within American society. Thank you Public Enemy!"

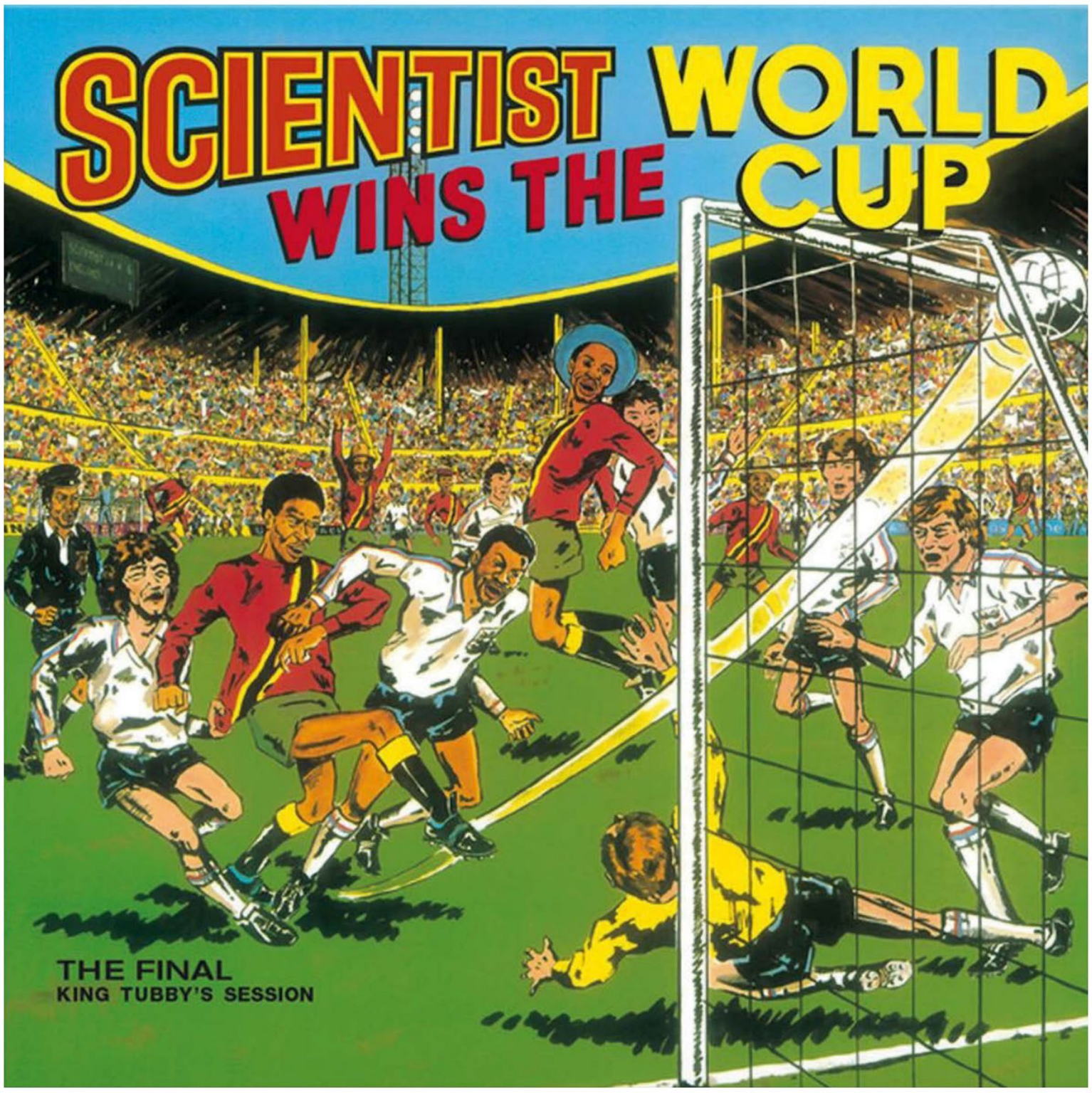


KRS-ONE
CRIMINAL MINDED
"KRS-One was way, way ahead of his time with this album. In my opinion, he has one of the greatest underdog stories of all time. And, hey, who doesn't like to root for the underdog?"



DE LA SOUL
3 FEET HIGH AND RISING
"De La Soul has to be regarded as the most abstract yet skilled group to date. In this who is cooler than who world of rap, I think of them as revenge of the nerds on steroids!"

A TRIBE CALLED QUEST
BEATS, RHYMES AND LIFE
"ATCQ picked up the baton and kept the Native Tongues clock alive. Their hippy approach to what De La was doing, combined with Afro-centric messages and the greatest boom bap, solidifies them as one of the greatest for sure!"



#34 Scientist

SCIENTIST WINS THE WORLD CUP

Glenn Hoddle and Kevin Keegan look on helplessly as Jamaica's Scientist lashes a seventh World Cup final goal past a defeated Peter Shilton on the cover of this 1982 dub collection featuring the Roots Radics. Cover artist Tony McDermott applied a fair amount of poetic licence – Jamaica didn't even qualify for the finals in Spain, while England crashed out in customary fashion at the second round. Mancunian McDermott was Greensleeves' in-house designer and his work for the LP produced by Linval Thompson, Junjo Lawes and budding engineer Scientist became hugely iconic, depicting a much celebrated, if fictional, victory over the old colonial rulers. While the stricken England team included all of its perm-sporting stars, the Jamaica XI was boosted by the presence of Greensleeves star players Eek-A-Mouse, Clint Eastwood & General Saint, Michael Prophet, Yellowman and Ranking Dread. A presumably partisan Junjo wears the referee's strip. "The punky, reggae, soulboy circles I knew regarded footballers as being champions of the laughable mullet and curly-perm hairstyles," McDermott told *Vice*. "Jamaicans liked nothing better than the idea of beating the former colonial masters. So the reggae massive reacted well to the drawing." A later reissue was retitled to give Junjo the credit for winning the World Cup for Jamaica.

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY

SNAPSHOT

THE PRETENDERS

NEW YORK, 1980

While the band formed in 1978, and launched their first three singles the following year, 1980 was the year The Pretenders broke really big. Although released in November, *Brass In Pocket*, one of those ubiquitous number ones you'd hear playing everywhere, reached the number one spot in January 1980 – the same month as their self-titled debut hit the racks. Nick Lowe produced the band's first single, *Stop Your Sobbing*, but decided not to work with them again, as he thought they were "not going anywhere". It meant Chris Thomas would take over on the recording sessions. *Pretenders* bulleted straight in at number 1 on the UK Albums Chart in the week of its release and stayed on top of the pile for a month. It also made the top 10 across the pond in the States. The band were in demand, and, in particular take-no-prisoners frontwoman Chrissie Hynde, pictured here in a photographer's studio in New York before a shoot with Martin Chambers, James Honeyman-Scott and the piano-loving Pete Farndon. Tragically, a mere three years later the band would be down to only two living members, after both Honeyman-Scott and Farndon died in drug-related incidents. ●

WHY I LOVE

LUBOŠ FIŠER
VALERIE AND HER WEEK OF WONDERS OST

HILARY WOODS

With her new solo album, *Birthmarks*, due out in March, the former JJ72 bassist explains why the gothic soundtrack to a 1970s Czech horror film made such an enduring impression

Ten years ago, I got my first record player. The speakers were 1980s hi-fi creatures that I rescued from a local skip. The turntable itself was a present from a friend, who recognised that after hauling my music from rented flat to rented flat for some years, it was possibly time to find a home in how I listened to my records as opposed to where they were being stored. I grew up without a telly but surrounded by vinyl. My parents' record collection spanned from releases by Elvis, The Shangri-Las, Irish tenor John McCormack and arias by Maria Callas, to umpteen classical records, particularly piano collections by Chopin, Rachmaninoff and Bach. Then there was Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Deanna Durbin, Nina Simone – spanning to my older brother's Nine Inch Nails collection, Iron Maiden, Irish ballads and airs and a selection of Gregorian chants. The family's box of vinyl seemed to expand every time I went to look inside. These records were treated with reverence. I'd sit there for hours watching the needle hit the groove, polishing any records that had scratches on them.

The task of choosing one record that stands out as a favourite for the purposes of this article is difficult, but one that has made a particular impact on me in recent years is Luboš Fišer's soundtrack to Jaromil Jireš' 1970s psych Czech surrealist horror film *Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders*, based on Vítězslav Nezval's novel of the same name from 1935. The record was released on Finders Keepers in 2006 and consists of 23 tracks. The entire album is hypnotising and heavily influenced by European folk and early sacred music.

It is a rare gem and feels like a sonic arthouse filmic poem. From the opening track, *The Magic Yard*, through to *The Sermon* and *The Visit*, there are gothic, wondrous and liturgical undertones to the pieces that all have a distinct pastoral origin. There are also musical motifs throughout the record that repeat themselves many times and further cultivate a cohesive ambience of ritual, worship, wonder and trance-like psychedelic atmospherics. Fišer uses a lot of early instrumentation; harpsichord, horns, lutes, lyres, bells, and employs singing techniques like recitative, syllabic and plainchant monophonic instrumentals and unaccompanied unison singing, repetition and drone, together with cadential and melodic structures based on early pentatonic scales.

There is a simplicity and purity to a lot of the tracks, while simultaneously they are all richly evocative and echo each other in mood. Tracks such as *Homeless* and *Confession* stand out for their lush, striking and dramatic colour. There is an economy to this record that I love. Each track is a miniature scene or stanza interweaving and progressing from the last, albeit all crafted from similar ingredients. The record's inimitable magic lies in the fact that it cross pollinates both sonically and in its visual, conjuring a fairy-tale surrealist landscape that has a dark underbelly.

Reminiscent of *The Wicker Man*, it has a distinct cult-like quality, and sits on the shelf next to other 1970s psych-folk records like Linda Perhacs' *Parallelograms*, Sibylle Baier's *The Colour Green* and Wendy and Bonnie's *Genesis*. It is also a record that speaks volumes to more contemporary records from the likes of Modern Nature and Moon Duo, and resonates heavily with earlier music that I grew up with by the likes of Palestrina, Tallis and Hildegard Von Bingen, as well as drone and electro-acoustic contemporary inspirational outpourings from Áine O'Dwyer and Sarah Davachi. Fišer's work touches on threads running through all of the above records. Its hallucinogenic, trance-like quality and folk horror beauty stays with you. To hear and have it on vinyl, is a gift.

10 Questions For... TOM SMITH, EDITORS

Editors have been at it since 2002 and with the release of best-of compilation *Black Gold*, now is the time to take stock. **Gary Walker** talks to their frontman about the band's longevity, their back catalogue and hanging out with R.E.M.

15 years separate your debut album and the release of *Black Gold*, a period in which the music industry has changed hugely. What do you put your longevity down to?
"Good looks, good songs and thick skins! I think being a band who have mixed it up stylistically over the years has helped a lot, we've taken our audience on a journey and kept ourselves creatively engaged at the same time. If we'd stuck to making records like our first two we'd have got bored a long time ago."

Your debut album *The Back Room* went on to sell a million copies worldwide and the follow-up *An End Has A Start* went on to No. 1 in the UK album chart. What do those two records mean to you now?
"I'm immensely proud of all our records but yeah, that first chapter was obviously a very exciting time, we were doing everything for the first time, seeing the world, playing festivals, at the Brits! It was pretty cool to get our brand of miserabalist indie to such a mainstream audience."

A 'greatest hits' always offers time for reflection. How do you feel about the evolution your music has made over that period?
"It's been very natural for us, to try to mix it up, to feel like in our musical world we're achieving new things when we're in the studio each time. I remember *Papillon* confused the hell out of people at the time, I'm sure it turned some of our fans off the band forever! But over time, it's become one of our defining songs. You can't please everyone all of the time, longevity is achieved by pleasing yourself, being selfish and believing in your art."

How difficult was it to hone down the final tracklisting? Did you get together as a band to do it?
"We talked a lot, via email mostly. Limiting the collection to one CD helped streamline it, then there's the three new songs to go on. We wanted to represent every album, which doesn't give you much time to play with! Then we have to consider that some of our records are bigger in other territories than others, an Editors 'best of' for Belgium would be different to the UK for example, Italy different again… so yeah, it took some thought, but we got there in the end. After being so selfish for 15 years, in some ways it's the most considerate record yet."

What's the best song you've ever written?
"*No Harm*."

What was Flood like to work with? How instrumental was he in the direction you took with *In This Light And On This Evening*?
"That album was the biggest step, and although it marks a step away from mainstream popularity in many ways, without it we wouldn't still be making music now. Flood was great, a total legend, it gives you belief to have him there with you. He made sure those songs were still played, that we still operated as a band, despite not playing guitars anymore."

Your career as a band has coincided with the lowest ebb for vinyl sales, followed by the subsequent resurgence. What does it mean to you as a format?
"It means your artwork still has a chance to look mint."

Which five records by other artists could you not live without?
"R.E.M., *Murmur*; Radiohead, *OK Computer*; The Blue Nile, *Hats*; Spiritualized, *Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space*; Peter Gabriel, *So*."

Copies of *Bullets*, your early single that was limited to 1,000 copies, are much sought-after, selling for £65 on Discogs. Did you hold on to any?
"I've got a couple, yeah. Well, my parents do."

What are your memories of touring with R.E.M.?
"It was an absolute joy. Hot summer nights, mostly in Italy. Peter coming into our dressing room every day chatting about obscure bands and records, until if I'm honest we were all a bit bored. Ha. Mike and his bass tech sharing shots of vodka with us side of stage while they played. Being invited on stage with them to play *Orange Crush* together in Helsinki. Michael Stipe being super sweet and welcoming after their shows... either out at dinner, by which point we were all too drunk to communicate, or in their dressing room. He was fucking cool." ●

"IF WE HAD JUST STUCK TO MAKING RECORDS LIKE OUR FIRST TWO WE'D HAVE GOT BORED A LONG TIME AGO"

ROB BAKER ASHTON

When You're Strange...

Beautiful people: (from l-r) Mick Quinn, Gaz Coombes, Rob Coombes and Danny Goffey

After a decade away, the return of Supergrass for a 25th anniversary tour and boxset celebrates a band who were always pop masters – while never quite fitting in. **John Earls** hears from four men determined to keep their identity

Supergrass' cartoon logo was one of the classic images of the 90s, immediately marking out the trio's distinctive looks and personalities: spiky-haired pixieish frontman Gaz Coombes, long-haired wildman drummer Danny Goffey and elder statesman bassist Mick Quinn. Gaz's older brother, laidback hippy keyboardist Rob, was seamlessly incorporated into the imagery when he joined officially for fourth album *Life On Other Planets* in 2002.

That they thrived together for six albums is testament to honing each other's skills and individualism while keeping a heads-down work ethic. Supergrass are too open and approachable to be called "insular" but, well, there's a reason their new boxset and accompanying Best Of are called *The Strange Ones*. It's an otherness that Gaz feels is the band's most potent quality. "I'm really proud of what we achieved and, more than anything, how we achieved it," he says, explaining the reasons why they're back, 10 years after their final show in 2010. "We kept our own identity. That's hard to do. It's hard not to fall into the trap of becoming generic. When pop gets big, it unfortunately usually means it sounds like something else, because there's a template and a formula. When something brand new comes along, it usually gets watered down, but I'm proud that we approached our albums always as a reaction to the music we'd just made."

Mick agrees, citing Supergrass' return as a corrective to the current scene. "Listening back to our gigs for the boxset, there's an element of

They're no longer young, but the reassembled Supergrass still run green

danger," says Mick, who joined shoegaze heroes Swervedriver in 2015. "Our shows were quite spontaneous, and I think bands over-worry about making mistakes. They work at every second of a gig, which makes things very safe and quite bland. Hopefully, what we'll bring on our return is that bit of danger. I always liked the feeling our music could fall over at some point… and it sometimes did. That's what's missing at the moment, the sense of the unknown."

A SPARK REIGNITED

Although there wasn't much personal animosity between the four when Supergrass split, the disappointment that they'd stopped being able to communicate musically left its mark. Gaz quickly embarked on a solo career that's seen three acclaimed albums, including a Mercury Prize nomination for *Matador* in 2015. But he wasn't at peace with his legacy until recently.

"Ultimately, I fell out of love with the band," he admits. "I wasn't enjoying it, I didn't like it by the end. That taints everything else, which is sad, but that's life. Fixing the emotional damage of the last 10 years means I couldn't hear our music in the way I'd like, because other feelings got in the way. But I've had the time to readjust. I know now that, if something wasn't right at the time, it's because we were young and experimenting, so I wouldn't like to redo anything. It was hard for me to love it, as I was left with a bit of a dark feeling about it all, but the last few months since we got back together has helped me enjoy it again."

Rob's reaction to Supergrass' demise was even more extreme than his brother's. "I put all the Supergrass kit into the garage for years, as I wasn't earning a crust from music anymore," he explains. "I wasn't even really listening to music." What revived the softly-spoken keyboardist's love of music was inheriting his and Gaz's grandfather's piano. When he died in the 1980s, their grandfather bequeathed a piano that stayed in the family's holiday home in Normandy. When that was sold in 2014, Rob took it on.

"The piano went into my dining room and it reignited my spark," he says. "Long before the Supergrass reunion was discussed, I'd sit at the piano and write new chord progressions and riffs. It was really nice, especially that it happened on something of my grandad's."

"I'm really proud of what we achieved and, more than anything, how we achieved it. We kept our own identity. That's hard to do"

Rob is a trifle reluctant to reveal what he's done professionally post-Supergrass, laughing: "Let's just say it was a differing, colourful array of jobs to pay the bills."

BAD TIMING

The reunion was first discussed in 2015, potentially to mark the 20th anniversary of debut album *I Should Coco*. Gaz's *Matador* was out, Danny was releasing his debut solo album *Take Your Jacket Off & Get Into It* as Vangoffey, Swervedriver had just put out their first album with Mick… "There were a few conversations, but the timing wasn't very good," Mick explains. "On balance, it didn't feel right to get back to promote the reissue of just one album."

The comeback properly took shape at the end of 2018, when Danny pointed out that 2020 would mark both a decade since Supergrass' final show and 25 years since *I Should Coco*. "In my mind, it's now or never," Gaz insists. "I'd been definitely reluctant, but now the timing is right, I wanted to mark those incredible years with the boys. I really care about Supergrass."

Now back in Oxford, Mick was living in Australia when Danny's email suggesting the reunion arrived. "I was on a road trip in the desert," he recalls. "It took me a couple of days to have enough internet signal to get back to Danny. I had mixed emotions, but the timing meant I wasn't really hesitant. The idea of 'How do we do this creatively?' kicked in immediately."

Part of that creativity was assembling the expansive boxset and Best Of. The singles compilation is in reverse chronological order, starting with *Diamond Hoo Ha Man* and ending on *Caught By The Fuzz*. This imitates Supergrass' farewell tour of 2010, whose setlist also travelled backwards. "It makes people address what happened at the end of the band," notes Mick. "I know people will be scratching their heads and thinking 'Where's *Alright*?' It's a great experience on vinyl, though Side Two starts with *Fin*, which is a very strange beginning!"

As the band's hoarders, Mick and Gaz were the main curators of the boxset. It was launched in September with a cover of The Police's early single *Next To You*. One of four previously-unreleased boxset songs, Supergrass had recorded the demo for the tour accompanying final album *Diamond Hoo Ha*.

"That took a while to find," laughs Mick. "It took a bit of pestering to get it from Gaz once he found it on a hard drive in his basement. He had to do some complicated manoeuvre of hooking up this ancient hard drive to a bit of kit that'd convert it into the correct format."

Gaz is particularly delighted the boxset includes Supergrass' first demo, four-track recordings of *Caught By The Fuzz*, *Lose It*, *Sitting Up Straight* and *Strange Ones*. "Hearing the rawness, getting the history and the sense

Not In It For The Money

While Supergrass' boxset *The Strange Ones: 1994-2008* is commendably all-encompassing and reasonably priced at £150, *LLV*'s review in issue 35 had one complaint: their six albums are included on vinyl, but frustratingly on picturediscs. It's a format Mick Quinn admits isn't ideal, but is an aspect he wants the band and their label BMG to address soon.

"Generally, I think the boxset is great value for money," Mick insists. "But we've had to make some compromises. In the main, having the albums on picturedisc was about re-evaluating our artwork. I was able to concentrate on getting the artwork onto the picturediscs, and I'm especially pleased with the one for *I Should Coco*. BMG set the budget and suggested how to make it cost-effective, and those picturediscs came within the budget. I oversaw the mastering of the picturediscs for the boxset and I wasn't disappointed with how they came back."

Having overseen the boxset, Mick hopes the albums will receive standalone reissues on heavyweight audiophile black vinyl. "Now the boxset has happened, we can go back and address the vinyl quality," he explains. "Doing that is a high priority. If you're that much of an audiophile, the original pressings are out there, but I know they go for big cash, which is why I'm angling for the standalones."

Although he wouldn't be drawn on what the release will be, Mick also revealed that he was finishing off the artwork for a Supergrass release for this year's Record Store Day.

of what was to come… that was pretty amazing," the singer acknowledges. "There were only ever two or three cassettes of that demo. I don't even know if the other boys still have theirs."

The boxset features the six albums on both CD and picturedisc vinyl, with an additional seven CDs of live songs, studio demos and B-sides. Mick bought several live bootlegs online, as well as asking superfans to go through their collections: the holy grail was unearthing a full gig of Supergrass' tour with a four-piece horn section for second album *In It For The Money*, finally found via a concert at an Irish showground. The boxset deserves to see *Diamond Hoo Ha* reassessed: a flop on its release, it stands up as anarchic glam with the same carefree mood of the band's roots.

"I'm pleased you think that, as it's an important record for me," Rob agrees. "In the later days, making music became more difficult as our lives became fuller. We were carrying the baggage from our lives into the studio. On *Diamond Hoo Ha*, we really got together again, making a commitment to leave that baggage to one side for the short period of three weeks in Berlin the record took." Mick adds: "I hadn't really addressed our later stuff for a long time. I was surprised that there are some areas of prog-rock in there!"

LACKING GRAVITAS

Does having such an exhaustive boxset put Supergrass into the category of heritage artist? "There are some crazily expensive boxsets out there. I've seen several for The Beach Boys," ponders Gaz. "But you feel they warrant it, because they had 40 years of No. 1 albums. When I first heard our boxset was £150, it was more than I expected, because I'm not sure we have the gravitas of those heritage artists. But I think our boxset is great, just about right for what's on there.

"Sometimes, the stuff you don't release doesn't get released for a reason. That's why I don't buy posthumous releases. When I pop

Gaz Coombes first entered the music world at age 14 as the lead singer in Oxford band The Jennifers

it, I don't really want my wife going through my ProTools demos. There'll be a message there, saying 'Leave this, it's rubbish!'"

That attitude helps explain why no demos from the sessions for Supergrass' unfinished seventh album are in the boxset. In 2009, the quartet began the krautrock-inspired *Release The Drones*. "Some of the backing tracks are amazing," Mick reveals. "There are some harmonies, but no good vocal takes – only one song had finished lyrics. Releasing them as they are would do those songs a disservice. Whether we revisit them if we ever record again, I don't know."

Ah yes, will Supergrass ever record again? It's clear talking to them there really are no definite plans one way or the other beyond the tour starting this month and a festival run that includes playing immediately before headliners Duran Duran at Isle Of Wight.

SAME OLD JOKES

Gaz is pleased the band's dynamics have stayed constant: "We've all evolved as people, but the raw connection is the same whenever we get together. We can enjoy those moments, and it'll be great to hang out again on tour. But we'll probably steer clear of studios for now. New songs? It's not on my radar at the moment, but you never know. If we write something on the road or in soundcheck, that could be worth documenting somehow."

Mick takes up the thread, saying: "If we get into a creative collusion, this could run and run. We'll have to see what takes more precedence in our lives, but if we get over-ridden by Supergrass, I'm sure we'll run with it." Gaz, who is halfway through writing his fourth solo album, points out: "This tour opens up whether we want to be Supergrass again. Releasing new material would change everything again, because then you're back in that machine. Whether we all want that, I don't know, but never say never."

Mick turned 50 last year and, while Gaz is still a relatively youthful 43, the idea that the perennial kids of *I Should Coco* are starting to enter their sixth decade is hard to grasp for a generation of fans, let alone the band themselves. "Predictably, we've got the same in-jokes from 20 years ago," laughs Mick. "At least we've got some new jokes too, as well as a lot of history and a lot of shared reference points. Some of the band have become more political and we work out how to deal with that side of our relationships. In essence, while we've become four middle-aged blokes, we haven't become four entrenched old gits."

Indeed, the biggest problem facing Supergrass is just what to play on tour. "We'll be giving people what they want, and the obvious big songs take up 85-90% of the set," muses Rob. "But a lot of the other songs have stood the test of time and that's trickier to pick out. Having hours of good songs to fit into 90 minutes? That's a nice problem to have."

"While we have become four middle-aged blokes, we haven't become four entrenched old gits"

Road To Ruin...

Having spent "around £100" on the alternative 'cowboy' sleeve of David Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World*, Gaz Coombes is Supergrass' biggest vinyl head.

Gaz, who names Piccadilly in Manchester as his favourite record shop, says: "Vinyl has a holy place. You can over-romanticise it, but the soundbites about its warmth, character and tactile nature are all true." Gaz's best recent bargain was a Shangri-Las album for £3 at the local Cancer Research shop in Oxford.

Mick Quinn mainly buys second-hand records. The most he's spent is £35, but he was delighted to find a cheap copy of Can's *Ege Bamyesi* recently, saying: "I've been listening to it for 20 years but, on vinyl, I'm finding little fluttery details I hadn't heard before."

Rob Coombes calls himself "a slightly recovered" vinyl addict, losing his obsession when he was no longer able to find a stylus for his Sansui turntable. The vinyl revival led the keyboardist to get his Sansui back out of storage, with his daughter's gift of Pink Floyd's *The Final Cut* one of his favourite ever Christmas presents. "Not returning records to friends after you've borrowed them should be punishable by three months inside," laughs Rob. "I lost all The Orb's records. Whenever I lose a record like that, I always end up thinking that the album was much better than it really was."

YUKI KUROYANAGI

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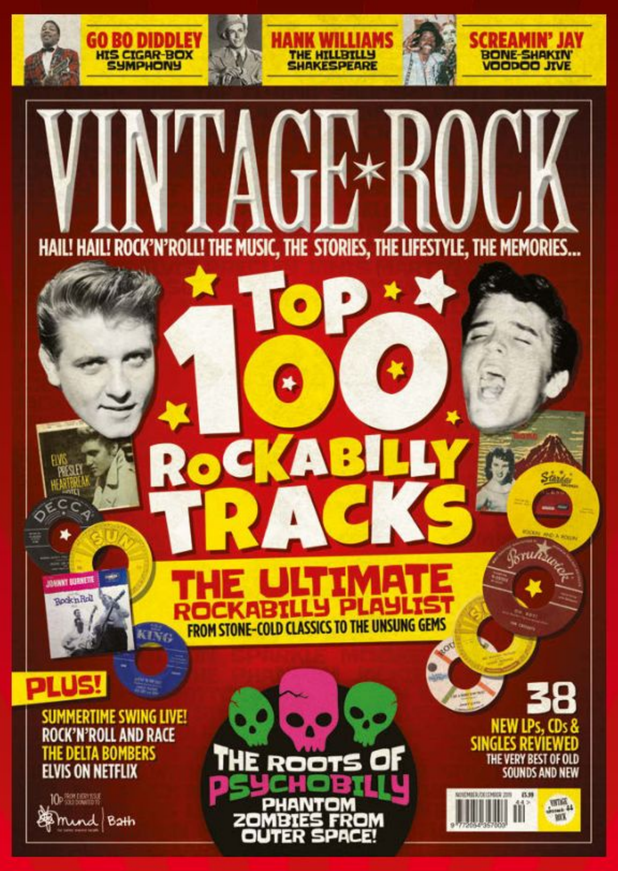

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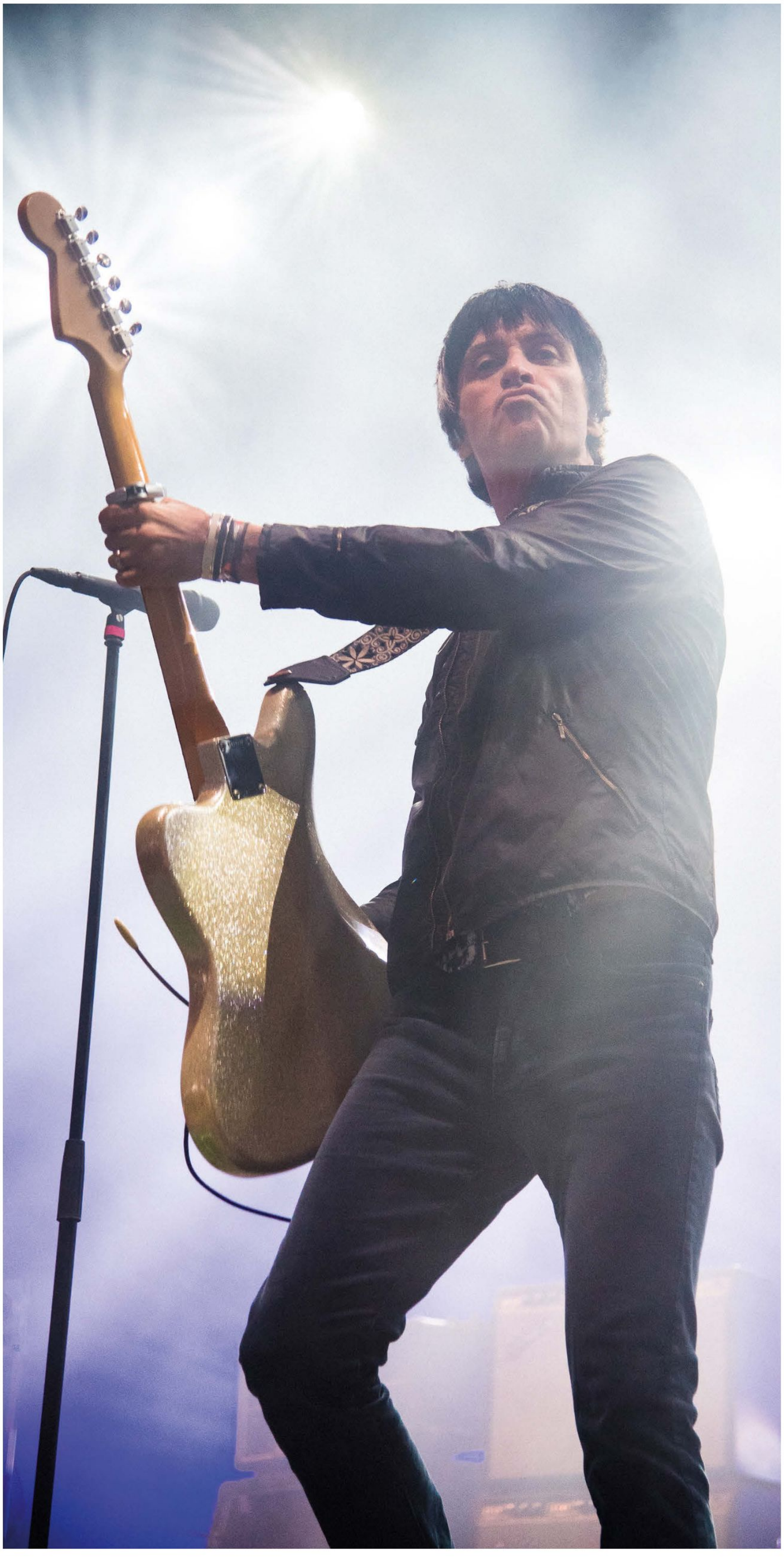
45 RPM

As someone so in thrall to 7" singles that he's got a tattoo bearing '45 R.P.M' on his arm, there was only one way Johnny Marr was going to celebrate the first chapter of his solo career: with a singles boxset. Discussing the merits of singles, B-sides and where the album fits in with it all, Johnny tells **John Earls** why the 7" remains the perfect format...



Indie guitar hero Johnny Marr remains besotted with the 7" single format

"The 7" single and 45rpm is as symbolic as religion and mysticism to me." Johnny Marr is discussing the tattoo on his right forearm, which bears a "45 R.P.M." inscription in Parlophone's vintage font. Johnny's favourite of his nine tattoos, it matches the image of Shiva on his left forearm. "I wanted to echo the Shiva's religious symbol," says Johnny of the tattoo he had done when he himself was 45, in 2008. "45s are a really big deal to me, and I wanted to honour that."

It's surely no coincidence that 45 was a landmark year in Johnny's life – after giving up alcohol, he took up running. He still runs about 35 miles every week. "45 turned out to be way more significant than turning 30," he laughs. "My life took on a different momentum. Whenever friends have got to that age, I'm very enthusiastic with them about becoming 45. I'd started running but, once I hit 45, I basically became Forrest Gump."

It's only natural that Johnny spends so much of his life running at top speed – his new singles boxset *Single Life* is a rare example of Johnny Marr looking backwards. There was his acclaimed autobiography *Set The Boy Free* in 2016 but, musically, Johnny hardly ever stands still. The reason for the boxset is to celebrate his solo career's first phase: he's now

NIALL LEA JOSEPH OKPAKO/REDFERNS/GETTY

released 10 singles in his own right. "Ten is a good number," states Johnny. "It sums up the first part of my solo phase, and the time is right to release it now, because there'll be something new coming soon."

Johnny apologises for sounding sleepy, explaining he's been working overnight, not just on his fourth solo album but a pair of movie soundtracks with his friend Hans Zimmer. They last collaborated on the score for Christopher Nolan's *Inception*. "I'm not supposed to say what the movies are," he admits. "But it's me and Hans, so you can probably guess." Nolan's new thriller *Tenet* is due out soon, and as we were about to go to press, it was announced the pair have collaborated on the new James Bond soundtrack. Johnny's own next album is five songs in: "At the place where I'm about to find out what it is." The idea it could go anywhere also applies to its lyrical themes, though the self doubt in the epic *Walk Into The Sea* from 2018's *Call The Comet* is a touchstone. "I learned people connect with an emotional authenticity," explains Johnny. "I'm getting more and more OK with revealing my own emotions. I'm trying to find the right balance between emotional authenticity and really cool pop art ideas, which I learned from Brian Eno and Siouxsie Sioux. I don't care whether *Spellbound* is something Siouxsie actually felt, it just makes for a really good single!"

THIS IS POP

It's important to Johnny that his albums contain "at least two or three and hopefully four or five" singles. He says he's "100%" a pop musician, eulogising the compilation albums such as *20 Dynamic Hits* he grew up on in the 70s. "I learned to play and particularly arrange music from studying those compilations," says Johnny. "Those compilations had Argent, Deep Purple, Sparks, Bill Withers, Sly And The Family Stone, Slade… that wasn't artless music, so I've always taken pride in saying I'm a pop musician. I have 45rpm tattooed on my arm, not 33rpm."

As part of that ethos, Johnny relishes his role as what he calls "The singles guy" in his bands. "In Electronic, I pretty much always came up with the singles," he says. "*Get The Message*, *For You*, *Vivid* – they were me and it was maybe the same in The The, with *Slow Emotion Replay*. I have a respect, enthusiasm and excitement for what a single is. Paradoxically, the restrictions a single imposes on you, I see as a strength. Being restricted to three or four minutes, you have to make an impact, the intros have to be really interesting. Alex Turner, Paul Weller and Noel Gallagher understand that, and really good modern people like Billie Eilish do, too."

When Johnny began his solo career, he bought his first jukebox, installing his AMI Continental in the middle of his kitchen. "*Upstarts*, *New Town Velocity* and *Dynamo* were written very much with that jukebox in mind," he says. "I no longer put a strong argument for the single being culturally essential, because it's great you can listen to music on the bus or at the gym on your headphones. I spent a lot of my school days walking around with invisible headphones on, because I'd play a song really loud seven times in a row in my bedroom before walking to school, trying all day to keep the sound of it in my head before rushing home to play it again."

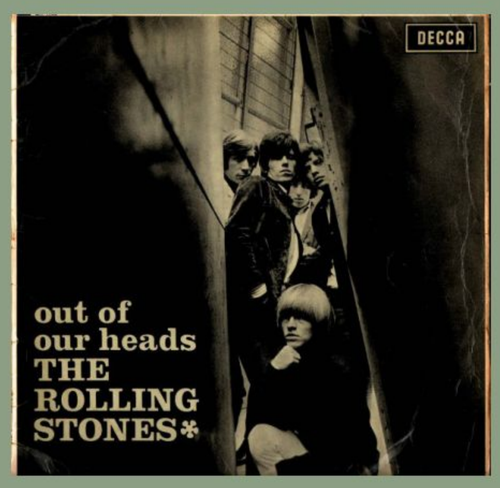
What was the last song Johnny played seven times in a row? "I still do it! I loved *Walk The Walk* by Gaz Coombes and any good new band like Fontaines D.C. will get that treatment. The boring real answer is the song I'm working on right now. My poor family have to live with that whenever I get excited by a song. I come home, play it eight or nine times in a row until they go, 'I get it! It's really good! Great, can we move on…?'"

ON THE FLIP

Equally as important for Johnny's singles are the B-sides. In an age where any songs not used on an album tend to get saved for its Deluxe Edition, *Single Life* is wonderful for having a wealth of fantastic new tunes on the flipsides. The scabrous rollicking pop music of *Jeopardy* and *Spectral Eyes*… Johnny hasn't lost his ability to treat anyone willing to turn the single over to a whole other world of wonder.

"The loss of the B-side is a lost opportunity for musicians," he states. "I know what great results the B-side can bring. I don't see the 7" as a niche retro idea, I still see it as the perfect format. As a device for writing songs, it's wholly valid. You shouldn't ignore the opportunity to put out a great B-side. A perfect B-side holds your attention. It can't be entirely throwaway, it has to have intrigue. Before I formed The Smiths, I regarded B-sides as an opportunity, which I got from Roxy Music. They give you a licence to be eccentric and go under the radar."

The Smiths, of course, were one of the all-time great B-sides bands… "Everybody knows that, if you're into The Smiths, the B-sides were a culture unto themselves," says Johnny. "That makes me very proud. We walked the walk, and it's crazily cool that some of our most successful songs came from B-sides. The only Smiths song on *Single Life* is *Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want* which, having been a B-side, is a circular



Going Out Of His Head

Vinyl obsessive Marr owns no fewer than 9 copies of this early Stones LP

To this day, the most money Johnny has spent on one record dates back to his Smiths days. "I spent £80 or £90 on a version of The Rolling Stones' *Out Of Our Heads*," he recalls. "I was obsessed with that album in The Smiths; I've got seven versions of it – two American editions, a German pressing… A friend spent £500 on The Velvet Underground's first album in its original wrapping, but I can't be bothered with that side of collecting. I have to play it! I'm lucky, because fans have gifted me some amazing records, like an original version of The Stooges' *Raw Power*."

Johnny's favourite record shop is veteran Manchester treasure trove Kingbee. "They've stayed open for so long because their prices are fair," he reasons. "I found an early John Barry record there for £17 recently."

Johnny buys new releases on vinyl where he can, but admits he still blags singles from friends: "When I heard *Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Action* by Franz Ferdinand, I texted Alex Kapranos saying, 'Does this exist on 7"?' It was a very 'hint, hint!' message, and Alex kindly sent me one. I still get excited when a song I love exists on 7"."

"I don't see the 7" as just a niche retro idea, I still see it as the perfect format. The loss of the B-side is a lost opportunity for musicians"

aspect of the compilation, in more ways than one. I associate B-sides with freedom, I've never seen them as an obligation. The B-sides on *Single Life* gave me an outlet for power-pop, for want of a better term. *Beginner* is one of my favourite lyrics I've ever written and that was designed to be a B-side. *Spectral Eyes* is a real fans' favourite and that wouldn't exist without the B-side. I wrote it for Blondie but, once I got into it, I thought 'I'm keeping this!'"

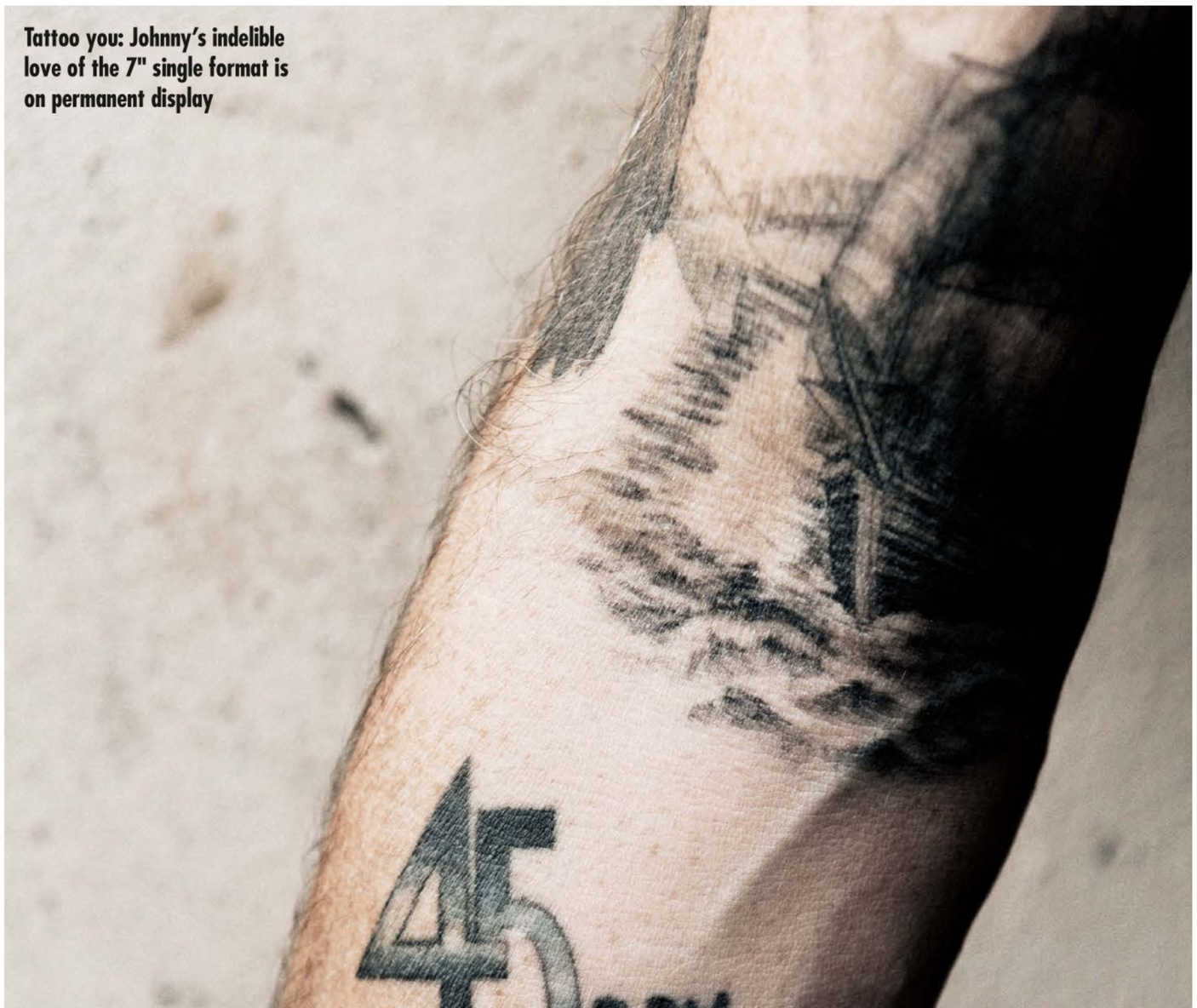
Asked for his favourite B-side, Johnny chooses The Isley Brothers' *One Too Many Heartaches*, featured on the B-side of their 1969 single *Behind A Painted Smile*, though he considers: "Any Isley Brothers B-side is amazing. That'd just trump *Child Of The Moon* by The Rolling Stones, which is a rare example of the Stones doing a great song just as a B-side. As a kid, the only way you could own *Child Of The Moon* was to have *Jumping Jack Flash*."

THE LONGER FORMAT

If Johnny Marr chose the single speed as his permanent body art affiliation, it doesn't mean he's any less enamoured with albums. Passionate and above all interested about all areas of music and people, Johnny is enthusiastic about everything music can give to people – and you may have noticed he has made some classic albums.

"I wanted to do it all," he laughs. "Pop is as much about the album as the single. The album is a good framework as a writer too, because if you've got an arc of 10 or 11 tracks, you want one that's a little bit maverick. That gives you the canvas to write a song like *Well I Wonder,* or *There Is A Light That Never Goes Out* by The Smiths, or *New Dominions* and *Walk Into The Sea* on my stuff. I was very happy for The Smiths to be regarded as an albums band as well as a singles band – *Meat Is Murder* doesn't have a single on it. When I got into a certain space on it, I was aware that on *The Queen Is Dead* we were making a piece of art, an album that was totally its own entity."

Another classic album of Johnny's is Electronic's self-titled 1991 debut with Bernard Sumner, recently reissued on vinyl. Although Johnny had already revitalised The Pretenders and The The after The Smiths, Electronic were the first band Johnny had started since The Smiths ended in 1987. After immersing themselves in rave culture for *Technique*, New



Tattoo you: Johnny's indelible love of the 7" single format is on permanent display

Sonically, Johnny has never been one for standing still

KIERAN FROST/REDFERNS/GETTY NIALL LEA

Single Life collects together the first 10 solo single releases by Johnny Marr in a limited edition 7" box

"The album is a good framework as a writer too, because if you've got an arc of 10 or 11 tracks, you want one that's a little bit maverick"

Order were imploding in the financial debris of the Hacienda and Factory's collapse. "I felt the weight of expectation going into Electronic, because of who me and Bernard are," Johnny admits. "I did a fairly good job of putting that all to one side and not letting it get in the way. It was such a creative and inspiring time, not just for me, but for everyone of my age in Britain at that point. My house was insanely creative. And the good news is, I've had 30 years of people really liking that Electronic record." While making *Electronic*, Bernard was Johnny's housemate, living with his then girlfriend alongside Johnny and his wife Angie.

"Domesticity wasn't really a big part of Bernard's agenda at that point," says Johnny with much understatement. "Bernard was great if you like waking up to half the criminal fraternity of Manchester in your front room." The pair remain friends, but Johnny baulks at the idea of reforming, saying: "Bernard's busy in his band and I'm busy with mine."

Johnny is happy to see *Electronic* get re-released, but chooses 2009's *Ignore The Ignorant* by The Cribs as the album he's worked on that he'd love to see get the reissue treatment. Recording started when Johnny had just turned 45… "I'm really proud of that album, because there are just so many good songs on there," he muses.

"*Cheat On Me* and *We Share The Same Skies* are great 45s and *City Of Bugs* is a great album track, one of my favourite songs I've ever done. I remember writing that in a spooky little barn in Portland, Oregon. There's something in the air about *Ignore The Ignorant*, it feels to me like it'd be a really valid reissue. The Jarman brothers are a couple of generations along, but they have the same spirit as The Smiths for knowing how to make a great single package. There's a continuity to The Cribs' singles, which you can see in their artwork: it looks like a collection, the same as Buzzcocks, X-Ray Spex, The Strokes or anything Noel does."

Single Life ends on pulsating double A-side single *Armatopia/The Bright Parade*, two new songs that have been recorded since *Call The Comet*. Johnny won't be drawn on whether they'll be in tune with the sound of his next album, so the big question remains: has Johnny Marr got any singles lined up for his next record? "That really would be talking a good game," he laughs. "I'm pretty excited about a couple of the tunes, but I need to write appropriate words for them before I decide if they're singles yet."

Whenever Johnny Marr's next album does arrive, you can guarantee one thing: it'll have some outstanding 7"s to accompany it.

Ignorant Is Bliss

The Cribs' album is overdue the reissue treatment

Johnny Marr is right that The Cribs' album he was a band member for is due a reissue. He joined the Jarman brothers after meeting bassist Ross in Portland, Oregon, where Ross had moved with his wife and Johnny's then-band Modest Mouse were based. Guesting on The Cribs' 2008 tour, when they began work on *Ignore The Ignorant,* Johnny left Modest Mouse to become a full-time Crib.

Ignore The Ignorant hasn't been reissued since its initial limited vinyl run on Wichita in 2009. It currently goes for £45. Two 7" singles were released from the album. *Cheat On Me* was released in two different formats in August 2009. A clear vinyl 7" backed by a live version of *We Were Aborted* fetches around £10, while a posterbag edition featuring new B-side *So Hot Now* is £12. Second single *We Share The Same Skies* was released that November, with a live take of *City Of Bugs* on the B-side. The blue vinyl 7" costs £15. Johnny's other vinyl single from his Cribs days is a split 7" for 2010's Record Store Day. It features *So Hot Now* and Portland punks The Thermals' standalone single *Separate*. Issued on Kill Rock Stars, copies are plentiful at a fiver.

The Cribs' PR told *LLV* there are no plans for a reissue of *Ignore The Ignorant*, with the band at work on their eighth album, following 2017's *24-7 Rock Star Shit*.

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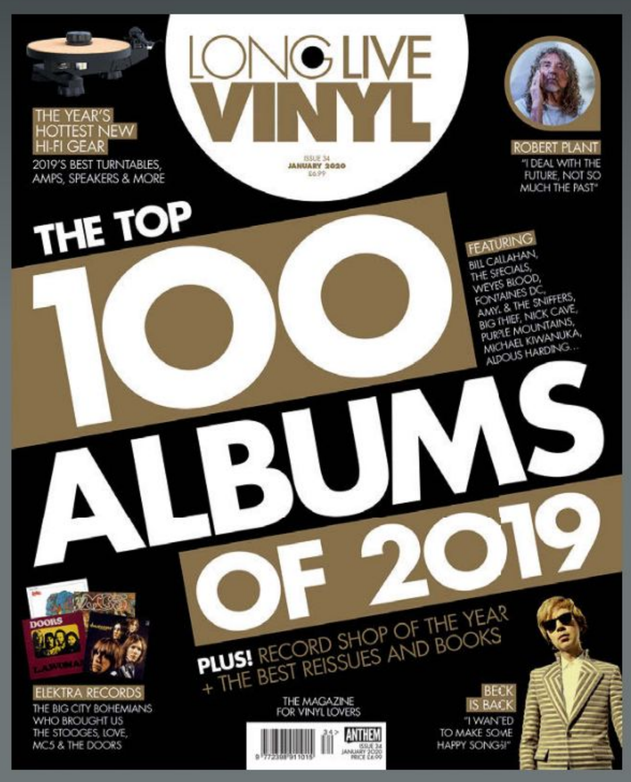

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In the world of Wire there always has to be a sense that things are moving forward, and that you're thinking differently

With their debut album, *Pink Flag*, hitting the racks back in November 1977, post-punk vets Wire are still as experimental, unpredictable and relentlessly forward-looking as ever. **Huw Baines** discovers a vital band who are 17 albums in and still fine-tuning their process

MATIAS CORRAL

Plenty of bands have been eaten alive by narratives that attack their work from the outside. Under that sort of scrutiny, records with individual merits can become little more than trite comeback stories, visits to the last chance saloon, or meek attempts at recreating former glories. Wire have been navigating that reality for more than four decades.

Ever since their *Chairs Missing* LP upended the apple cart in 1978, reconfiguring the short, sharp shock of their seminal debut *Pink Flag* into dub-inflected post-punk walkabouts, the expectation has been that each subsequent release would provide similar refinements. Where most bands are seemingly honour-bound to churn out the same thing over and over again to satisfy their fanbase, Wire must continually find new avenues to stroll down.

"If a band's been around for a while, there are two ways to handle it," guitarist and vocalist Colin Newman says. "The way the majority handle it is basically to say, 'Oh well, it was all in the past and we'll live off that'. If you're trying to do something contemporary, or coming back from having been away, the absolute number one thing you can't be is shit.

"It's all about emotional and physical investment. Figuring out what it is that makes that thing tick, and trying to get to something about how that works within the contemporary domain. Every Wire record is an experiment about how you make a Wire record. A certain amount of the methodology stays the same, but a lot of the thinking around what it is that you're doing and the way that you do it is being constantly revised."

Wire's latest surge into the unknown is called *Mind Hive*. It's a fascinating piece that offers a different view of their creative desires to the one *Silver/Lead*'s more streamlined indie-rock presented us with in 2017. It ducks and weaves against existing preconceptions by repurposing elements from the band's past and setting them against a pronounced synth base that serves as the chugging, mechanical inverse of 1990's *Manscape* album. Held in its grasp are moments of playful melody and brooding atmospherics, forays into indie-pop and sombre, almost prog-leaning, pastoral passages.

"*Mind Hive* has a greater number of pieces that I started in the studio that are not based on guitar," Newman says. "Rob [Grey, drums] decided that this time around it might be easier for us if he plays to a click, which does make it slightly more fiddly when you start a piece because you can't just play. But it certainly made working with it off the back end way easier.

"It may seem like nothing to others, but in the world of Wire there always has to be a sense that things are moving forward, and that you're thinking differently about the pieces and how you go about the whole thing. But we're not stupid enough that we'd start a massive experiment and throw away everything that we've learned."

VINTAGE WORDS

Having spent 2018 working on reissues of their first three albums (a trio completed by their 1979 masterpiece *154*) and with a career-spanning documentary called *People In A Film* set to follow late in 2020, *Mind Hive* lands at an important time for the band. These days, they are in a rarefied position as the financial beneficiaries from their catalogue, and as a result they could easily give in to sweet, sticky nostalgia. But Newman insists that these backwards glances are only fleeting.

"It could put us in a situation where we're like, 'Why are we bothering with all our new stuff?'," he says. "Really, the lifeblood of the band is new material, and it always has been. In January 1978, the month after *Pink Flag* came out, there's a bootleg from somewhere by the sea in Britain and we're playing a set with like four things off *Pink Flag*. In a way, there's nothing new going on here."

> **Every Wire record has always been an experiment about how to make a Wire record**

One element of *Mind Hive* that cannily underscores that attitude is the opening song, *Be Like Them*. It finds Newman repurposing a lyric written by bassist Graham Lewis in the late 70s. Having failed to turn it into anything of note 40 years ago, he has now sculpted it into something vivid and exciting. The song churns and rumbles, riding a thudding, percussive riff into a quietly melodic chorus that drips with irony. "Nothing new about that," Newman spits.

Lewis's vintage words allow us to assess modern-day Wire from an unusual angle. Captured in amber, these are the thoughts of a person in their mid-20s who is trying out new approaches at a rapid clip while the band around them shapeshifts. They're delivered, though, by a man in his mid-60s. "It's a very different Graham voice to how he would write now," Newman admits. "It's much less considered, and more personal. In some ways, it's a young man's view of the world, which is nice to incorporate because why should we always be putting across the viewpoint of people in their dotage?

"We don't think like that. I think people could identify with that – being forced to conform and think like you're supposed to. You could extrapolate it to now. People of our age are expected to have a certain set of political views, which I certainly don't have. My political thinking is much more like young people, because I care about the future."

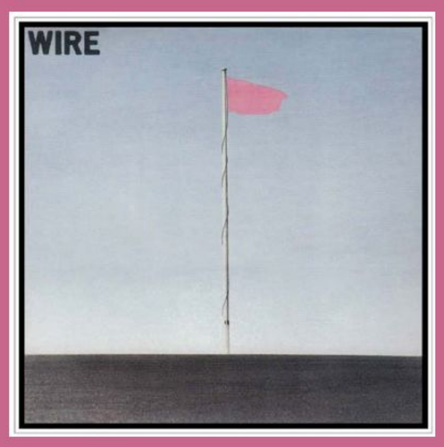
Reinforcing that idea is the bleak *Shadows*, which plays an important role in *Mind Hive*'s overall tone and ambience. Here, Wire drop the listener into an unwelcoming present as Lewis paints dystopian vignettes that might eerily have been cribbed from the nightly news, equating the path we're currently walking with the road to past atrocities: "The men are lined up and shot into graves. The children are murdered, the women enslaved. Shadow of the future, shadow of the past."

"That's a very contemporary Graham lyric," Newman observes. "It's political, you can imagine situations like that. I think at times all of us can have quite dark views about how the future might unfold for mankind, on the course we're heading. In a way, it's the most downbeat piece on the album. It was something we wanted to have on the record and the placement of it was quite difficult."

WONKY POWER POP

As Newman alludes to here, a great deal of thought has been given to how *Mind Hive* unfolds. He quietly confesses that Wire remain more likely to sell a CD than a slab of wax, but the record was sequenced with vinyl in mind. The lion's share of the work fell to guitarist Matthew Simms, who has been playing with the group for almost a decade after taking the reins from founding member Bruce Gilbert.

Colouring Outside The Lines



Pink Flag established Wire as a band who got to the point quickly. That impression didn't stick for more than a few months, but the truth is that their songs have generally been uniform in length: two, three or four minutes. The anomalies in their catalogue that push running times up towards prog territory, *Boiling Boy*, *Sleep-Walking*, *Torch It!*, plus a few more, are all the more obvious for that reason.

At a shade below eight minutes, *Hung* is the latest of these sore thumbs, and it's also one of Wire's most vital extended pieces. It's long, yes, but it's not aimless. Nor is it self-indulgent. Its broad canvas is heavy and sharp-witted throughout, its shuddering momentum setting the scene for *Humming*'s sublime dissolve. It's Wire breaking open form to get at further meaning, jettisoning a few more preconceptions along the way.

"Wire have always been comfortable with multiple aesthetics," Newman says. "We don't think like a band that only existed in the independent era. There seemed to be a point in the 80s when bands started self-defining in what I've always thought were quite narrow ways: 'we're this kind of group so we're only allowed to do these kinds of things'. What happened to the idea that it's just an artistic exploration? Nobody sat down and said, 'We need to go in a more electronic direction, guys. This is what the focus group told us to do'."

Still standing (from l to r): Matt Simms, Colin Newman, Graham Lewis and Rob Grey

The LP's first gambit is its pop side, which bounces through the addictively wonky power pop of *Cactused* and the sublime *Off The Beach* on its way to a shuddering stop. What initially appeared to be an investigation of Wire's melodic structures is then overtaken by something altogether more difficult and alienating.

Shadows opens the second segment, which subsequently leans hard into *Mind Hive*'s reluctant black heart. "It was interesting that Matt brought that concept," Newman says. "It's a way of categorising the material, and saying, 'OK, if this is the darker side, let's start with the darkest song'. That gives a kind of lead in to what follows."

RAZOR-SHARP EDITING SCALPEL

Even at this stage of their career, Wire's four members found room to disagree over the finer details. That perhaps says something about why they remain a compelling proposition, capable of producing work they feel is worth fighting over 17 albums into the whole endeavour. The monstrous, near eight-minute *Hung*, a rarity in their catalogue as a song that has been allowed to sprawl, was perhaps destined to provide a sticking point.

Newman felt that it should cede the floor to the elegiac *Humming*, which revolves around the profoundly affecting hook "Someone was humming a popular song" as *Mind Hive*'s final statement, and he won. "*Hung* was always going to be difficult," he says. "Everyone thought we should start with *Be Like Them*, and I felt quite strongly that we should finish with *Humming* and not with *Hung*. The idea was for it to disappear into noise, disappear into beauty. Then the calmness and the sense of pathos and loss that comes from *Humming* is heightened."

When excised from the running order, *Humming* is also an interesting case study as far as Wire's razor-sharp editing scalpel is concerned. Newman speaks of refining each song to bring out the best in it, with egos being set aside. The song began life underpinned with a drumkit and a rhythm guitar line. Both he and Grey had to accept their contributions falling to the cutting room floor.

"It's not like 'we don't need a drummer'," he says. "But by taking those things out, it didn't lose its poignancy somehow. It is, ultimately, about how the pieces feel. *Off The Beach* also went through a huge transition. It started off as being almost punk rock. In the end, as I worked on it, it was like, 'It has to become lighter, more jangly, more acoustic, more pop'. There's what we play together, then I work on a refinement, then we come back together and people have other ideas, then that gets brought in, and then I finish it off.

"Matt came over for a session and we did some brutal editing that I wouldn't necessarily do. When I'm working on my own on the record I'm not thinking, 'Now I've got it and I don't care what anyone else thinks'. It's like I've got the band on my shoulder. I'm not going to try and do stuff that is way outside of what we decided. But when there's two of us, it's easier. We're listening to it together and thinking, 'No, that's what it needs'."

Wire have been at it since London's pubs rattled to the sound of punk's first wave, but unlike so many of their contemporaries, they're still here. They're still standing, and still discussing their music in terms of need. *Mind Hive* will delight the old breed who have traced each about face in the band's history, and it liberally provides that crucial ingredient to set them back on their heels again: new sounds that aren't shit.

The day that Wire stop trying to figure out something about themselves through their music will be the day one of punk's most important stories ends. But that's one fear we can set aside for now. "Everything changes all the time," Newman says, and he's not wrong.

Live Wire: don't turn up to a gig expecting a greatest hits setlist

ANNETTE GREEN GIULIANA COVELLA

AMERICAN

ADVENTURE

Isobel Campbell's first new album in a decade has been worth the wait, but, as she tells **Jonathan Wright**, it has been a long haul to bring it to life

There are records that come together easily and quickly, where everything flows. Then there are records where the artist has to wrestle an album into existence as, it seems, the world conspires against the creative process. Isobel Campbell's *There Is No Other…*, to a near-absurd degree, falls firmly into the latter category, an album where record company problems, financial hassles, ill health and even the vagaries of the climate all intervened at different points.

Remarkably, these stresses aren't evident in the LP itself. Instead, it's a shimmering collection of psychedelia-tinged pop songs more than strong enough to suggest the recording process, at least, was an enjoyable experience. Sometimes, the music is celebratory, as on a cover of Tom Petty's *Runnin' Down A Dream*, sometimes pensive, as in the way *Ant Life* reflects on the pace of US cities, but the album throughout is finely honed and focused.

"Och, the music side, sometimes being in the studio, there'll be a puzzle and it's like we need to fix this, but the music is always a joy," says Campbell down the line from California, her Scottish accent still strong despite her having lived in the US for several years. "That's the good stuff. It's all the other stuff that's *poo*, but sometimes the other stuff is so all-consuming. It's almost toxic as well, that the time spent doing the thing that I love is severely diminished and that irritates me a lot."

So where to look for a starting point to this long and sometimes convoluted story? In 2013, it was announced that Campbell's professional partnership with sometime Screaming Trees frontman Mark Lanegan, with whom she recorded a trio of albums between 2006 and 2010, had ended. Campbell, newly married to sound engineer Chris Szczech, upped sticks from Glasgow to the USA and began planning a solo LP. But there was soon a problem. The couple's home in California lacked any kind of air conditioning and it was "110 degrees Fahrenheit" outside.

It was time to head east, to lakeside cabins in New York State owned by Szczech's family. Travel would become a recurring theme in years when the couple seemed often, too often, to be criss-crossing the US. For Campbell, the Brit, this was at least a chance to be a tourist. The reality of travelling from one side of a continent to another by car was sometimes rather less romantic. "I couldn't feel my bum, I just couldn't feel it," she says of the last two days of one trip east.

The Glaswegian ex-pat is currently living in Pasadena with her husband and two dogs

Much of the album came together in New York, including time spent laying down music in an insurance office in Syracuse. "There was a lady with a really loud voice, so we had to wait until after office hours to go and record," says Campbell.

CASHFLOW ISSUES

But, a recurring theme in the story of the LP, there were problems too. At one point, the couple decided to move permanently to the Catskills, New York State, a rural area steeped in musical history – Woodstock, strong associations with Bob Dylan and The Band, and an area where David Bowie had a home and recorded. They rented a farmhouse, where Campbell promptly developed the "weirdest allergies" and fell ill.

"I was flat on my back for months and months," she says. "I was like, 'Oh my God, what's wrong with me, am I terminally ill?' It's not fun to talk about, but whenever I would leave the area I felt OK." Money was tight. Her father gave her the money to rent a cabin in Bearsville, although she should, she says, "have probably gone home at that point, maybe just given up". The cabin was a summer home and it was January, but it was all the couple could afford. "Even though I was still not feeling very well, I was like, 'I don't care, even if they take me out feet first I am finishing this record. I've never bailed on anything. I am finishing this'," she says. "So I did, I hung on by my fingernails, wore all my clothes at once, and we had a wood stove and we just kept the wood stove going all the time."

Finally, with the help of twice-yearly royalty cheques to pay additional musicians such as multi-instrumentalist Nina Violet along the way, she was able to finish the album (guitarist Jim McCulloch of Soup Dragons fame, plus Teenage Fanclub keyboardist Dave McGowan and Father John Misty's bassist Elijah Thomson also feature). Without Szczech's recording expertise and help, she says, the project would never have been finished.

The realisation the couple couldn't settle in the Catskills was a blow. "We were gutted," she

There Is No Other…* is Campbell's first solo effort since 2006's *Milkwhite Sheets

Between 2006 and 2010, Campbell recorded a trio of albums in partnership with Mark Lanegan

"I WANT TO PUT ON RAGS AND GO TO THE STUDIO, THEN SIT IN THE ROOM WITH ANALOGUE EQUIPMENT FOREVER…"

says. "We thought we were moving to have this lovely, more secure life, living in nature and it just wasn't meant to be. It was too much moving for anybody. I stare at a brown box now and whoah, I do not like those moving boxes, those U-haul packing boxes, they really freak me out!"

Campbell laughs often as she tells these stories and, at the end of the interview, emphasises that she wants the article "to be positive if possible". And yet, even after wrestling the LP into life over two years instead of the year she expected and mastering it at Abbey Road in 2016, there were still more twists in the tale as her record company went out of business, but not before arguments over promoting the record.

"If I could just be in the studio for the rest of my life twiddling knobs and faders I would," she says. "If someone says, 'What do you really want to do?' I want to put on rags, go to the studio and sit in the room with analogue equipment forever. The end. That's what I want to do. But they were like, 'This photographer, that photographer'." And I really, really don't mean it, I have the best intentions in the world, but I get ratty with that stuff, I don't like it. I find it really invasive, I'm not a model and so it pissed them off."

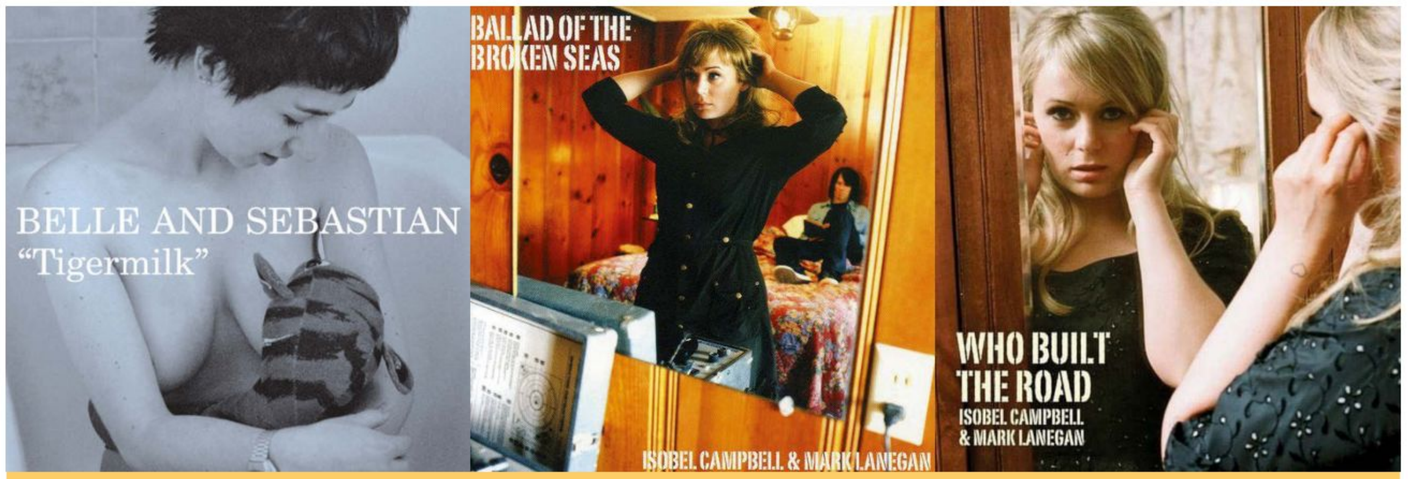
It took a year for Campbell to get back the album, now picked up by Cooking Vinyl, but an end was in sight. In the summer of 2019, when the first single dropped and the LP was announced, people emailed her to tell her how much they liked the music. She was in a "dream-like" state, "It was such a good day." She's happy, too, with the album itself. "It's weird because even though time has gone by, it still feels quite fresh to me," she says.

RELUCTANT PERFORMER

Good times, except now Campbell has to promote the record. She's not allowed to put on rags other than glad rags. Tours have been announced, including imminent UK dates. She has to overcome a "burning desire to run for the hills in Syracuse and stay there".

While her collaboration with Lanegan, when she was the main creative force in terms of the production and writing, appeared to end on a mildly sour note to judge by a 2013 interview where she talked about things being "like some crazy riddle or some crazy puzzle", that way of working did have one huge advantage from Campbell's perspective. Sharing the limelight with a gravel-voiced and charismatic rock singer deflected attention from Campbell herself.

"I liked hiding behind him," she says, now relaxed about looking back at the duo's work together. "I loved his voice, I loved singing with him. He would always joke, because some of the songs were a lot more fragile than some of the rock stuff that he does, [adopts gruff voice]



CAMPBELL ON VINYL

Collecting Isobel Campbell on vinyl can be an expensive business. First pressings of Belle & Sebastian's debut, *Tigermilk* (Electric Honey) go for a minimum of £450, a reflection of the fact only 1,000 copies ever saw the light of day. Other releases are less collectable, but most date from pre-vinyl revival boom days when pressings were limited in number. *Amorino*, for instance, will likely set you back at least £40, while copies of *Ballad Of The Broken Seas* are now routinely listed on Discogs for £100. A 7" copy of Campbell & Lanegan's *Who Built The Road* (V2, 2008) will cost £10. At around £30, vinyl copies of *Milkwhite Sheets* represent rather better value and may actually be a cannier investment.

JORDI VIDAL/REDFERNS/GETTY

CAMPBELL'S CAREER IN FOUR ALBUMS...

BELLE & SEBASTIAN
THE BOY WITH THE ARAB STRAP
JEEPSTER, 1998

Belle & Sebastian's third LP was the band's commercial breakthrough, which reached number 12 in the UK charts and sounded far more polished than its quickly recorded predecessors.
It was also the LP where cellist Campbell came more to the fore, contributing lead vocals to *Is It Wicked Not To Care?* and co-lead vocals to *Sleep The Clock Around* and *The Rollercoaster Ride*. Curiously, it seems Belle mainman Stuart Murdoch didn't realise 'arab strap' was a euphemism for a cock ring.
DISCOGS £24

THE GENTLE WAVES
SWANSONG FOR YOU
JEEPSTER, 2000

There's a sometimes tentative quality to Campbell's first two solo LPs as The Gentle Waves, a sense she's hiding in plain sight, perhaps because she hasn't yet worked out how to front a project. Nonetheless, the best material on this second LP, notably the bubblegum pop-tinged and (it seems reasonable to suggest) Nancy and Lee-influenced *Sisterwoman* suggests a growing confidence. *Amorino* (Snowstorm, 2003), released under her own name, would carry these ideas forward with more assurance still.
DISCOGS £27

ISOBEL CAMPBELL
MILKWHITE SHEETS
V2, 2006

It's easy but misleading to see Campbell's albums with Mark Lanegan – a way to explore Americana, she says – as having taken up most of the noughties for her. In truth, she's always been a versatile artist, adept at exploring different kinds of music. *Milkwhite Sheets*, an album that saw her grappling with the English folk tradition, and heavily influenced by the likes of Shirley Collins and Anne Briggs, proves the point. An overlooked gem from Campbell's back catalogue.
DISCOGS £19

ISOBEL CAMPBELL AND MARK LANEGAN
HAWK
V2, 2010

There's a grain of truth in the idea that the first of the Campbell/Lanegan collaborations, *Ballad Of The Broken Seas* (V2, 2006) LP, is the strongest of the three albums the duo made together, if only in that it set a template. And yet *Hawk* is fascinating in that Campbell's understanding of how to write for Lanegan arguably deepened over time, as the magnificent *Come Undone*, which it's somehow a surprise to discover isn't a cover of an obscure 45 from the 1960s, demonstrates.
DISCOGS £55

'I feel like I'm butt naked on this song'. But I didn't mind because I liked his voice. Now I can feel for him because when I started to do it on my own, I felt butt naked.

"But now, I've come around to the fact that I like paddling my own canoe. I like hiding, but I do actually like paddling my own canoe and I like independence."

She's similarly upbeat about her early work with Belle & Sebastian. "I always thought, when I got the demos for *Tigermilk* [1996], that if I hadn't been in that band, I would have probably been a fan anyway," she says. She's less enthusiastic about some of her earlier solo records, some recorded as The Gentle Waves, because, while she was "lucky" to get the opportunity, they catalogue her "learning" and maybe some of the material shouldn't have seen the light of day.

Back in the present day, Campbell, Szczech and their two dogs have settled in a home in Pasadena where she still doesn't have air conditioning, but where at least there are shady trees. Although whether she will ever feel truly settled in the USA is another matter.

Partly, that's maybe because these are uneasy times when nobody feels settled, but more specific reminders she's an émigré play in here, too.

"I went into Starbucks the other day," she says. "I was in the studio and I'm like, 'Oh my god I'm falling asleep. I need caffeine'. The guy [serving] looked at me and he could have been in Prince And The Revolution or something. He had a cool hat on and a polkadot shirt and stuff. And I went in, and he went, 'That will be six *American Dollars*'.

"People talk to me like I just got off the boat every day of the week, like *every* day. So nah, I will never be American. I'm British. And do you know what, if I didn't hate moving so much I would really like to get back at some point, I really would. I'll never be American, but I love the adventure, I really do. Maybe I'll go to Africa next or Jamaica. Adventure is interesting."

THE DARK ARTS

BLACK SABBATH AND THE BIRTH OF METAL

Fifty years ago, they crawled out of Birmingham boasting a sludgy sound that still defines 'heavy'. Black Sabbath are the band critics hated but fans adored, a primal rock wail that has influenced generations. **Michael Stephens** charts the influence of a legendary band and that sound...

It was all a bloody accident. Mishap #1: Aged 17, Tony Iommi sliced off his fingertips on his last work day at a steelworks on Birmingham's Summer Lane. Told by medics he would never play guitar again, Iommi refused to give in, and instead crafted plastic thimbles (made from washing up liquid bottles) for his damaged digits and relearned the guitar. Slower and, notably, downtuned.

Mishap #2: At their first 'proper' recording sessions, in London, the band simply played through their live set with minimal overdubs, but it was deemed good enough to release as their debut LP. Mishap #3: As Black Sabbath, the band of Iommi, vocalist John 'Ozzy' Osbourne, bassist Terence 'Geezer' Butler and drummer Bill Ward scored only one Top 10 single... and that was written under duress as they simply didn't have enough music to fill a second LP. They've been credited as the Godfathers Of Metal, the first 'stoner rock' band, even derided as Satanists when main lyricist Butler once wanted to be a vicar. And yet, Mishap #4: Black Sabbath do not consider themselves a heavy metal band at all.

STRAIGHT OUTTA ASTON

If the devil works in mysterious ways, he sure had peculiar plans for Black Sabbath. As Polka Tulk and Earth, the proto-Sabbath had toiled away in Midlands clubs to little avail through 1968 and most of 1969. Much more of a psych-blues outfit than they'd later become, they somehow tried to cram in each member's taste. Geezer Butler was into psychedelia; Iommi, the British blues revival of John Mayall

Black Sabbath, 1970: Bill Ward, Tony Iommi, Ozzy Osbourne, Geezer Butler

CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

and Eric Clapton and, because of his finger disabilities, Django Reinhardt. Ozzy loved The Beatles. Bill Ward liked all sorts, but had a jazzy, swinging style due to the drumming allure of 1940s big bands. And what did all *that* sound like. "We were shit," laughs Butler.

Still, they did manage to wangle some notable supports, one of which led to one of the most bizarre cameos in rock 'n' roll history. In December 1968, Jethro Tull were invited to appear in The Rolling Stones' *Rock And Roll Circus* film, the full version of which didn't appear until 1996. Tull guitarist Mick Abrahams had recently left, so band-leader Ian Anderson needed a new player, and quick. He remembered Iommi from a previous Earth support and hence Tony joined Jethro Tull (for all of two weeks) and found himself miming along to Mick Abraham's parts of Tull's *A Song For Jeffrey* and *Fat Man*. More strangely, it meant 20-year-old Iommi appearing in a faux circus big top not only with Tull, but alongside Clapton, John Lennon, The Who and the Stones (in what was to be Brian Jones' last performance with the band).

Iommi wasn't all that taken with the gig, though. He was riled by Tull's manager telling him, "You're really lucky you've got this job." "That really got on my nerves," Iommi recalled. "I thought, 'It's not luck'. Iommi knew how hard he'd worked to remaster the guitar, albeit with a style now unique to him. "They have me here because I know how to play – not because I'm lucky!"

Rather contrarily, Iommi later criticised the way that Anderson led Jethro Tull. They "worked different to what I knew. Ian Anderson was separate to the other guys. He'd sit on one table and they'd sit on the other. And it just didn't feel like a full band to me." He soon told them he wasn't staying.

That said, he did absorb some of Anderson's steely leadership. Earth/Sabbath manager Jim Simpson explained to band biographer Mick Wall, "Tony had a bit of a fixation on becoming

Rare Sabbath

A couple of boxsets you won't be finding in a charity shop

BLACK SABBATH
THE 10 YEAR WAR

Named in honour of their hate/hate relationship with the music press, this 2019 limited edition boxes up faithful repros of all the 1970s Ozzy-era LPs (plus the *Evil Woman* 7-inch, a book, posters, USB stick and more). Circa £1,000 already, even second-hand. Really.

OZZY OSBOURNE
SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE

Rabid fans of solo Ozzy are also well served: this 2019 limited edition box consists of 16 albums on 24 vinyl discs (173 songs and single B-sides) for a princely £500.

a star. He was the one who spoke most readily." In more practical terms, if he were to return to Earth, Iommi needed things to work in the quartet better: "It's probably fair to say," Iommi tells this author, "that I became the leader."

It was a team effort, though. When Butler/Osbourne penned lyrics for a song called *Black Sabbath* (even though the words are never mentioned), Iommi had a more tangible base to build on. He developed a riff of Butler's that was itself based on Gustav Holst's *Mars: Bringer Of War*. "The Vietnam war thing was happening and a lot of kids were getting into all kinds of mysticism and occultism," recalled Butler. "It was just a really big thing at the time." All of Sabbath's interest in any 'occult' was purely on the surface, though they did share a passion for sci-fi and horror movies. The name Black Sabbath itself famously came from a 1963 Italian horror movie (narrated by Boris Karloff) that Butler had seen.

Once Iommi had nailed his tri-tone riff, Earth suddenly sounded more menacing, and a template was born.

DEATH BECOMES THEM

They debuted *Black Sabbath*, the song, the same day they wrote it, at a pub 15 miles from Birmingham, in Lichfield. They were onto something. "The reaction was absolutely incredible," Butler later remembered. "In those days, when we played, everybody would be stood at the bar drinking, not really paying attention. But we played that and everybody just stopped dead... and listened. The whole place was just like in a trance. We finished the song and it just erupted, they went absolutely nuts."

In time, Earth renamed themselves Black Sabbath, too – though that decision was nudged along by another Earth who already existed. The rest of 1969 was spent writing and gigging. Jim Simpson organised some London showcases: at The Marquee club, label execs found Ozzy sporting a striped pyjama top and a water tap tied around his neck on string. No takers. Simpson called in a favour of a £500 loan from agent Tony Hall for some demo time and Sabbath were packed off to London in November 1969: specifically to Regent Sound studios, a mono facility with egg boxes on the ceiling for soundproofing. But the Stones had recorded some of their first LP here, Jimi Hendrix occasionally demo'd at Regent, too. Famously, Paul McCartney recorded *Fixing A Hole* in the B Studio because Abbey Road was all booked up: it's one of the very few famous Beatles songs not to be recorded at Abbey Road.

"And from that moment on, my life totally went off like a rocket"

But Regent Sound A was pretty basic: Sabbath began recording their live set on to two 4-track machines – the studio's only nod to 'modern' recording technology. Rodger Bain, a rising engineer not much older than the band, helped them with mic placing and it was he that added an extra air of musical foreboding, in the rainstorm and tolling church bells of *Black Sabbath*.

It was not meant to be an album, really. The band had no deal, and they were paid £100 each to record. "We got in," said Ozzy, "played [the songs], and 12 hours later we got back in the van, put the gear in and carried on driving." The next evening, Sabbath were playing for 20 quid in Zurich.

While Sabbath were traipsing around Europe, Jim Simpson began doing the rounds of the London labels again and, as he put it, "got another 14 'No's. I was madly enthusiastic, they were madly bored."

Eventually, Sabbath got a one-single deal with Fontana… though it was to be of the cover they recorded, of Crow's *Evil Woman*: Manager Jim Simpson had insisted they record at least one commercial song at Regent Sound. *Evil Woman* was an anomaly of the session, but to everyone's surprise, Fontana's sister 'underground' label Vertigo deemed the one-day recording ready to release as an album. So, *Black Sabbath* emerged on Friday the 13th, February 1970.

The band's camp were astonished when *Black Sabbath* entered the UK album chart at

Disciples Of Doom

Sabbath have influenced so many bands, they're akin to The Beatles of metal. You don't play this music without a debt to Black Sabbath. Even so, some notables are:

JUDAS PRIEST

Fellow Brummies Priest were geographically close enough to see Sabbath's spoils of war: guitarist KK Downing remembers being wowed by Tony Iommi parking his Lamborghini outside his mum's house. The bands don't really sound similar, but there's a mutual respect. Priest frontman Rob 'Metal God' Halford says: "Sabbath are in the same league as The Beatles or Mozart. They're on the leading edge of something extraordinary."

SLAYER

The Americans' furious thrash of the 80s actually sounds very different, but Kerry King says: "I always get the question in every interview I do. What are your top five metal albums? I make it easy for myself and say the first five Sabbath albums, simple as that."

METALLICA

They've covered Sabbath numerous times. Drummer Lars Ulrich says, "If there was no Black Sabbath, I could still possibly be a morning newspaper delivery boy. No fun."

ALICE IN CHAINS

In the early 90s, the then 'uncool' Sabbath cast a bigger shadow over grunge than many admitted. None were more influenced than Alice In Chains. Guitarist Jerry Cantrell said at the time of *Dirt*. "There's a heaviness and a darkness to Sabbath which I often cite as a direct influence to our sound. You can trace the bloodline, and I think you could say that of a lot of Seattle bands."

MASTERS OF REALITY

The rotating-member vehicle of Chris Goss is named after Sabbath's third album. What do you *think* they originally sounded like?

NIRVANA

Nirvana's debut *Bleach* has Sabbath's lumbering sensibilities writ large. At the time, Kurt Cobain argued, "I think we sound like The Knack and the Bay City Rollers being molested by Black Flag and Black Sabbath." Dave Grohl admitted, "[Sabbath] made an amazing contribution to music today. Almost every band that made it big in the 90s owed a debt to them."

ROB ZOMBIE/WHITE ZOMBIE

Robert Bartleh Cummings' industrial metal output is a lot more comic book than BS's, but he's wise enough to argue: "Every cool riff has already been written by Black Sabbath. You're either playing it faster or slower or backwards, but they wrote it first."

Ozzy and Tommy wigging out together at the famous Star Club in Hamburg

ELLEN POPPINGA - K & K/REDFERNS/GETTY

No 28. Moreso, when it rose to No 8 the following week. "I was speechless, I couldn't fucking believe it! And from that moment on, my life totally went off like a rocket!" said Osbourne. Up to this point, the band had barely had any press. Typically, it was only DJ John Peel who had shown any interest, with his BBC programme *Top Gear* broadcasting three session tracks in November 1969. Why were the music press so dismissive, even ignorant of Sabbath? Maybe it was geography – most of their shows were in or north of Birmingham, or in mainland Europe. Or perhaps it was because it was only then that LPs were overtaking singles as a fan-favourite format, with no hits, Sabbath simply hadn't registered with the London press despite their burgeoning live following.

Still, with that sort of commercial performance (and no label overheads on recording) Vertigo was understandably delighted. Warner Bros in the US quickly picked up on it, and offered a deal (albeit a poor one) to unleash *Black Sabbath* on America. It was finally released in June 1970, albeit with *Evil Woman* dropped (it was a song already too-well known in the US).

WAR OF ATTRITION

All this while, Sabbath had been toiling away. Other tracks were coming together – *War Pigs* was in an embryonic stage when the first LP was cut – and it wasn't long before Fontana wanted the band back in the studio. Only the gig-going faithful were still aware of who this band truly were.

The quartet had envisaged the first LP's cover to be some sort of *Meet The Beatles* portrait affair. When Vertigo packaged it with the now-famous depiction of Mapledurham Watermill – a historic mill dating back to the time of the Domesday Book in Oxfordshire, before which the designers at Vertigo had positioned a witchy "figure in black" – the band were nevertheless delighted. There was also a bespoke poem (by an unknown author) on the inside of the gatefold, printed inside an inverted cross. "Still falls the rain, the veils of darkness shroud the blackened trees, which contorted by some unseen violence, shed their tired leaves …" It ends: "…by the lake a young girl waits, unseeing she believes herself unseen, she smiles, faintly at the distant tolling bell, and the still falling rain." There was no picture of the band.

In some ways, Sabbath stood alone. True, their sound could have been the logical conclusion to things that had come before. The likes of Arthur Brown's *Fire* (1968) – although a bit of a pop novelty – provided a stark contrast to the hippy music that had been coming out of, particularly, West Coast America: there was no notion of "remember to wear some flowers in your hair" in Birmingham's industrial factories. As Butler said, "We wanted to put how we thought about the world at the time. We didn't want to write happy pop songs. We gave that industrial feeling to it."

Sabbath Covered

The 1990s brought a sudden upsurge of interest in Black Sabbath. Notably, from US grunge and alt-rock acts. Here's our pick of a few notable cover versions...

1000 HOMO DJS
SUPERNAUT

Alter-ego of Ministry's Al Jourgensen and Ministry (with uncredited help from Trent Reznor) bring some industrial clank and grind to the Sabs' gargantuan riffathon.
HIGHEST VALUE 1990 ORIGINAL 12", HOT! WAX! LABEL, £15

SCREAMING TREES
TOMORROW'S DREAM

Faithful cover lifted by Mark Lanegan's vocals. Found on ST bootleg *Saplings*.
HIGHEST VALUE CD ONLY, NO VINYL

VARIOUS ARTISTS
NATIVITY IN BLACK: A TRIBUTE TO BLACK SABBATH

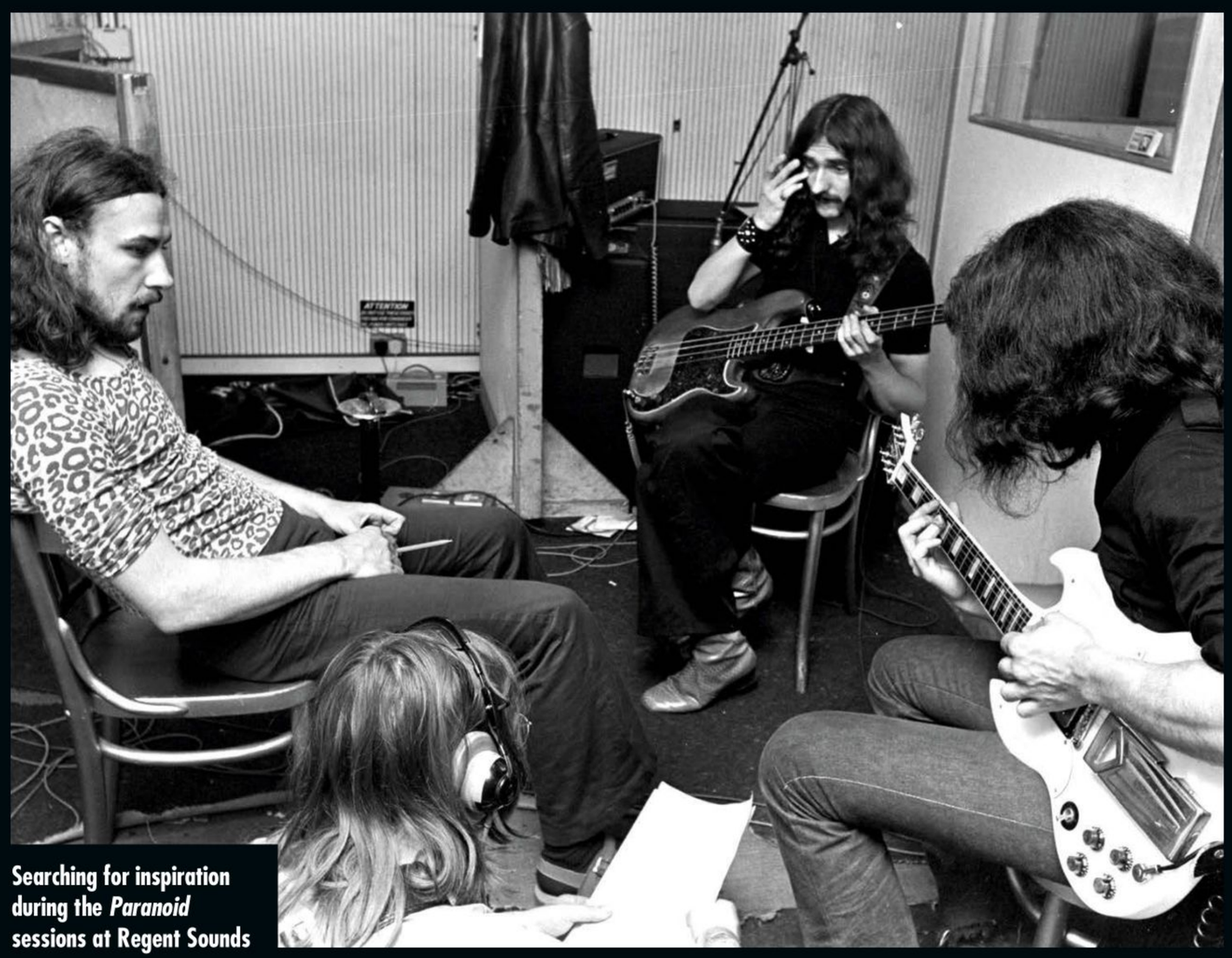
1994 LP compiling previous covers (1000 Homo DJs) plus bespoke tracks (Ozzy guesting with Therapy? on *Iron Man*, Ozzy with Primus on *N.I.B*) and rarities (Faith No More's *War Pigs* live).
HIGHEST VALUE 1994 ORIGINAL 2LPS, COLUMBIA, £170

PANTERA
PLANET CARAVAN

As one of the heaviest bands ever, Pantera threw a curveball by not covering a Sabbath metal rip-up, but their mellowest jazzy moment.
HIGHEST VALUE 1994 12" SINGLE RED VINYL, EAST WEST, £25

KYUSS
INTO THE VOID

In 1996, Josh Homme got his nascent Queens Of The Stone Age and previous Kyuss bands together for a split EP. He clearly owes a huge debt to BS's sludgy riffs.
HIGHEST VALUE COLOURED 10" VINYL, US ONLY, MAN'S RUIN RECORDS, £40. BEWARE THERE ARE SOME BADLY REPRO'D BOOTLEGS OUT THERE



Searching for inspiration during the *Paranoid* sessions at Regent Sounds

Likewise, the darker tones of Jimi Hendrix (on *Axis: Bold As Love*) and Cream provided a sonic springboard. The ramshackle malevolence of the MC5 and Blue Cheer were starting to make waves. But in 1970, no one was making records quite like Black Sabbath.

So far, so sinister. The gatefold and poem proved too much for Warners in the US, but in the UK it just added to the mystery. And it was, in effect, another 'mistake'… or at least something in which Sabbath had little input. Just a week after the debut's US release, Sabbath were back at Regent Sound to record a follow-up.

Sabbath were, in many ways, still naive. *War Pigs* was now completed, but it was eight minutes long: hardly a single. The epic had started in 1968 on a German tour where Sabbath were required to pad sets so much they just ended up jamming. It was originally called 'Walpurgis', dealing with the witches' sabbath, but even Vertigo weren't having that. To lyricist Butler, it was just an analogy. "To me, war was the big Satan..." and "All my brothers were in the army. And we all thought we were gonna get called up as well, to go and fight (in Vietnam)".

The press and much of the public were still scratching their heads about their success, when Sabbath dropped a bomb. It was actually the final song to be recorded for the second LP,

"To me, war was the big Satan... all my brothers were in the army"

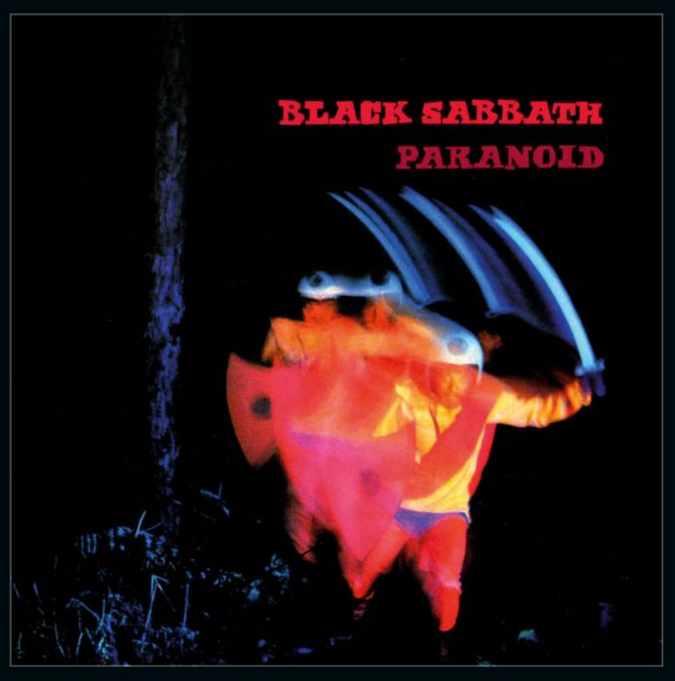
CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY GIE KNAEPS/GETTY

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

And so it came to pass, four long-haired men from Birmingham invented metal

An unusually calm and concentrated Ozzy tickles the ivories in the studio

which was at least three minutes short, but *Paranoid* became the band's first chart hit. "It was a bit of nonsense," according to Iommi, who said he'd written the riffs while everyone else was at lunch in the studio and was amazed when producer Rodger Bain asked them to record it properly. The producer himself recalled: "They said, 'You're joking. We're just pissing around. We just made it up'." Osbourne 'sang' Butler's finished lyrics for the first time on the recording, reading them off a sheet of paper.



Butler, the lyricist, was against it for other reasons. "I thought it was [Led Zeppelin's] *Communication Breakdown*. I thought it was so much like that we couldn't possibly get away with it. But everybody else just couldn't see it."

By September 1970, *Paranoid* had entered the UK Top 10 singles chart. In a year of heavy-guitar anthems – Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*, Free's *All Right Now* – Sabbath now had their own. The LP was also ready, with the luxury afforded of overdubbing and mixing at the 16-track Island Studios in Notting Hill.

Problem was, also ready was the sleeve image, a somewhat amateur photo of a figure in a pink leotard waving a sword running through woods. He was meant to be a 'war pig'; "pigs are pink, hence the pink fucking thing!" reasoned the ever-bluff Osbourne. But Vertigo knew they couldn't name the album anything else but after a Top 10 hit. So it became *Paranoid*. It made no sense and duly went to No.1 on the UK LP charts in October 1970. Another one of those mishaps had borne fruit.

JUST COZ YOU'RE PARANOID

From hereon, Black Sabbath were well on the way to becoming music's most notorious cult band. 'Heavy metal', even if Sabbath didn't warm to the term, was stirring at a grass roots level, possibly even helped by the simply dreadful press Sabbath were getting.

In *Rolling Stone* in the US, they only got round to reviewing the debut *Black Sabbath* when *Paranoid* was released. Even as famous a critic as Lester Bangs, a fan of punkish intentions, called Sabbath "unskilled labourers", deriding "inane lyrics that sound like Vanilla Fudge paying doggerel tribute to Aleister Crowley…" He concluded they were "Just like Cream! But worse".

Robert Christgau, self-professed Dean Of American Rock Critics, was just as derisive of *Paranoid* as Bangs. "The worst of the counterculture on a plastic platter – bullshit necromancy, drug-impaired reaction time, long solos, everything."

Ouch? Sabbath barely cared. By October 1970, they'd debuted in the US, though not without the usual Sabbath mishaps. The first two shows were a disaster, Iommi remembering "poxy clubs", where "our roadie plugged the gear in and it all blew up because it's a different voltage. We were so green, we had just put our PA system and amps on to the plane without packing them in anything, so they came out all bumped and scraped."

But they had somehow managed to snare a support to Rod Stewart's Faces at New York's

CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

Backing Black

Irish punkers Therapy? sound very different, but bassist Michael McKeegan has worshipped at the altar of Sabbath since he was a pre-teen...

"The first song I learned to play was *N.I.B* on piano, about aged 11. Next thing, it was: we have to get guitars! Me and my two brothers later formed a garage band called Evil Priest, the most blasphemous name we could think of. Growing up Catholic in Northern Ireland, all ex-altar boys, that's just the stuff you get into. I was born in 1971, so we were into 80s black and death metal, but soon worked our way backwards and Sabbath were obviously so important in that. It was like a punk-rock moment: *we* can do this. Something like early-80s Duran Duran, ornate pop music, we could never have done. A primal grunt from Birmingham seemed manageable!

"Therapy? got to play on the [1994] tribute album *Nativity In Black*. I heard that Ozzy's management spoke to ours because apparently, *he* wanted to do it. I was also excited by the idea of the album, with the new generation of bands like Sepultura and Machine Head paying tribute to Sabbath. We were busy back at that time, touring *Troublegum*… so scheduling was difficult. We rehearsed in Helsinki, flew back to London and recorded the track. Our drummer was not as well rehearsed as possible, there was a bit of bravado; 'ahh, it's only heavy metal!' But it's *not*. It's Bill Ward! We did the backing OK, me and Andy Cairns, did some vocals, and we flew off back on tour.

"A couple of months later we were in North America, and it was Ozzy's chance to record. Me and Andy insisted we had to go to the session on one day off. We literally got there as Ozzy was doing his second take of the vocal... and that was it, he was done. I was overawed, but I remember vividly saying to Ozzy: 'Oh, that was quick'. He just said, 'I've only been singing it for 25 years'! Fair point. We hung out, it was really good. One of the funny things is Ozzy has so much jewellery. He had to take off all this bling for the microphone, otherwise he rattles!

"We did a show in that summer of 1994, with Black Sabbath too – *Cross Purposes*-era when Tony Martin was singing. We got our autographs from Tony and Geezer, then Geezer asked for *our* autographs, because his son was a big Therapy? fan. The guy whose bassline I was copying on the piano age 11, asking me for an autograph? It was all surreal. Later, we played festivals with Ozzy's band in 1996. And it was a real family atmosphere with Sharon and the kids.

"As cynical as you can be with this business called 'show', the whole thing was quite sentimental. The old cliché is: never meet your heroes. Not in this case. They were all brilliant."

Primal grunters: Therapy? were more than happy to meet their heroes

Fillmore, and went down a storm. "It was a bit embarrassing, because they were shouting for us when he was on," recalled Iommi. "Was Rod OK with it? I don't think so when it happened but, yeah, he was alright later. "From that time in America, that's when we started to realise something was happening, we've caused some kind of a stir here." By the end of 1971, Sabbath were headlining the Fillmore…

From 1970 to 1973, Black Sabbath released five LPs, all of which are considered classics. *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* (1973) is not really 'metal' at all, and the jazz/blues/prog nuances of Sabbath often get missed by their critics. Even their followers, too – the sludgy bands

who picked up the doom mantle in the 90s – are often one-dimensional in comparison. But for what Sabbath started, they earned a mighty place in rock history.

When Sabbath *first* reunited, in the late 1990s, this author was with Butler and Iommi and decided to play the pair tracks by some of their younger disciples: Soundgarden, Masters Of Reality et al. The pair seemed genuinely dismissive of any perceived influence. "Well, *I'm* not sure that sounds like us," sniffed Iommi. Butler was forgiving. "We're *not* a heavy metal band," he laughed, before adding, "but… it's nice to be recognised for something I suppose."

THE ESSENTIAL Metal

Fifty years young, and as loud and obnoxious as ever, the world of metal remains a true musical phenomena. **Michael Stephens** turns the dial up to 11 and beyond

Metal fatigue? There's no such thing. As it notionally celebrates half a century of headbanging and hard-edged riffing, metal shows no signs of tarnishing. It's been a long and complex road. Black Sabbath's seismic debut LP still owes something to blues rock: later bands were influenced more by punk and rap. There's musical and lyrical diversity here: protest music, plenty of occult obsession, literary types who draw on fantasy themes and those who are simply here to party. Some of it is cerebral, some appears not to have a brain at all – in that context, its affinity to punk and hip-hop makes sense.

Indeed, the broader genre has gone through numerous changes. In the 1970s, 'heavy metal' was the simple nomenclature, even though that was a phrase first popularly heard in Steppenwolf's not-heavy-metal boogie of 1968, *Born To Be Wild*. In the post-punk era, 'metal' became just a suffix; first there was NWOBHM (New Wave Of British Heavy Metal), then thrash metal, death metal, doom metal, black metal, nu-metal… all became common currency.

A quick word about this list. *LLV* tried not to have multiple entries by artists. But when it comes to the likes of Black Sabbath, Metallica, Slayer, etc, that was impossible as their catalogues are simply too influential. And a quick word on exclusions. AC/DC are not in – they hate being called 'heavy metal' ("we play rock 'n' roll") and that's good enough for us. Def Leppard, though once huge, aren't really metal enough (see also, Bon Jovi), Guns N' Roses are too diverse, Motörhead are like AC/DC (Lemmy dismissed the metal tag). Complaints to the usual address.

Metal's longevity means you're unlikely to find much common ground or appeal in all of Sabbath, Metallica, Queensrÿche and Opeth. That's OK, metal is unusual in that bands can have extraordinarily long careers: metal fans are among the most faithful and of all ages. Heads down (literally), for the hardest, heaviest Top 40 you'll find.

40 HELLOWEEN
KEEPER OF THE SEVEN KEYS: PART I
NOISE INTERNATIONAL 1987
Helloween crystallised what's become known as 'power metal'. The ballistic tempos of thrash minus the punk and with soaring melody instead. Iron Maiden on steroids, if you will. The German outfit kept the concept going to a third instalment (in 2005) despite numerous line-up changes. A mere 15 albums in, they've now returned to the more trad metal of their youths, but *Keeper...* remains hugely influential.
FIRST PRESS £16

39 MAYHEM
DE MYSTERIIS DOM SATHANAS
DEATHLIKE SILENCE 1994
Not a recommendation as such: more an illustration of Nordic black metal's sometime lunacy. The music is furious, the words indecipherable, and the album was delayed due to the inconvenience of self-professed Satanist guitarist Øystein 'Euronymous' Aarseth being murdered by bassist Varg 'Count Grishnackh' Vikernes, who was also convicted of arson. One of the most aptly named bands ever.
FIRST PRESS £650 (IMPORT)

38 EXODUS
BONDED BY BLOOD
MUSIC FOR NATIONS 1985
This cult LP's influence far exceeds its actual notoriety. It's an album metal fans will claim is "genius" without even buying it. Record company disputes delayed its release by a year; if not for that, the Bay Area band could have been vying with Metallica. The usual metal tropes – breakneck riffers called *Deliver Us To Evil* and *Strike Of The Beast* – are perhaps predictable, but the execution is nothing short of phenomenal.
FIRST PRESS £30

37 KING DIAMOND
ABIGAIL
ROADRUNNER 1987
This crazed concept album about an evil child, from Denmark's Kim Bendix Petersen, is an epic of gothic storytelling – highly dramatic, dark and possibly a little bit fictional. But behind the deliberately bad slap makeup, Petersen shows himself an able lyrical and musical conceptualist: his falsetto is also off the map. Just like a Stephen King horror movie played out by The Darkness.
FIRST PRESS £23

36
CARCASS
HEARTWORK
EARACHE 1993
Bill Steer's Carcass remain notorious in the 'grindcore' stream of extreme metal. This major label debut is far from commercial, but brought a traditionally metal backbone amid the guitar carnage and, in the title track, even a slick video. Lead singer Jeff Walker's vocals remain throat-rippingly fierce.
FIRST PRESS £45

35
VENOM
WELCOME TO HELL
NEAT RECORDS 1981
The Geordies' debut was raw, but a big influence on the likes of Metallica: this is arguably the dawn of thrash, doom, speed metal and all that followed. The Satanic fixations sound comical and its primal sound drew one review to say it had "the hi-fi dynamics of a 50-year-old pizza". It bombed… but also changed 1980s metal forever.
FIRST PRESS £75

34
AVENGED SEVENFOLD
CITY OF EVIL
HOPELESS 2005
One of the few 'noughties' bands to pay true homage to the titans of 1970s metal, AX7 went old-school-ish on this third album. The tracks emphasised songwriting over speed and brutality. Some of AX7's 'metalcore' fanbase were disgruntled, but as the band noted: "14-year-old kids don't know about those classic bands, so guitar solos sound fresh and new."
FIRST PRESS £25

33
MÖTLEY CRÜE
SHOUT AT THE DEVIL
ELEKTRA 1983
Archetypal 80s glam/party metal, maybe, but *Shout...* is impressively, daftly agile. The likes of *Ten Seconds To Love* is silly, but the Crüe's Sunset Strip sleaze never actually sounded as good as it did here. Having the chutzpah to cover The Beatles' *Helter Skelter* is questionable, but the band's tongue was often firmly in its own cheek; this is giddy metal fnar-fnar for pustular, pubescent boys.
FIRST PRESS £20

32
ACCEPT
BALLS TO THE WALL
PORTRAIT 1983
The cover is so homoerotic it might make Frankie Goes To Hollywood blush, but behind the leather, Germany's Accept knew how to rock. There's some expected metal daftness on the surface (*London Leatherboys*), yet Accept's lyrics were mostly written by band manager/marketeer Gaby Hauke, wife of guitarist Wolf Hoffmann. It's an LP for outsiders. Dimebag Darrell was a huge fan, and *Balls*… went Gold in the US.
FIRST PRESS £15

31
ENTOMBED
WOLVERINE BLUES
EARACHE 1993
The Swedes were pioneers of death metal, but *Wolverine Blues* moves (just a bit!) to a more mainstream sound. Breakneck drumming, stop/start riffing that nods to Sabbath and plenty of misanthropic howling. Purists derided it as a "sell out" – it has things like verses and choruses – but for 'accessible' death metal (if there is such a thing?), it's a classic. **FIRST PRESS** £50

30
SYSTEM OF A DOWN
TOXICITY
AMERICAN RECORDINGS 2001
Apart from maybe Faith No More, no other band had such a freewheeling approach to metal as System Of A Down. The members' Armenian roots are evident in the melodies of *Needles*, and an unlikely hit in *Chop Suey*!. It controversially contained *ATWA* (air, trees, water, animals), a supposed exploration of the softer environmentalist side of Charles Manson.
FIRST PRESS £15

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Testament never quite managed to step out of Metallica's shadow

29 TESTAMENT

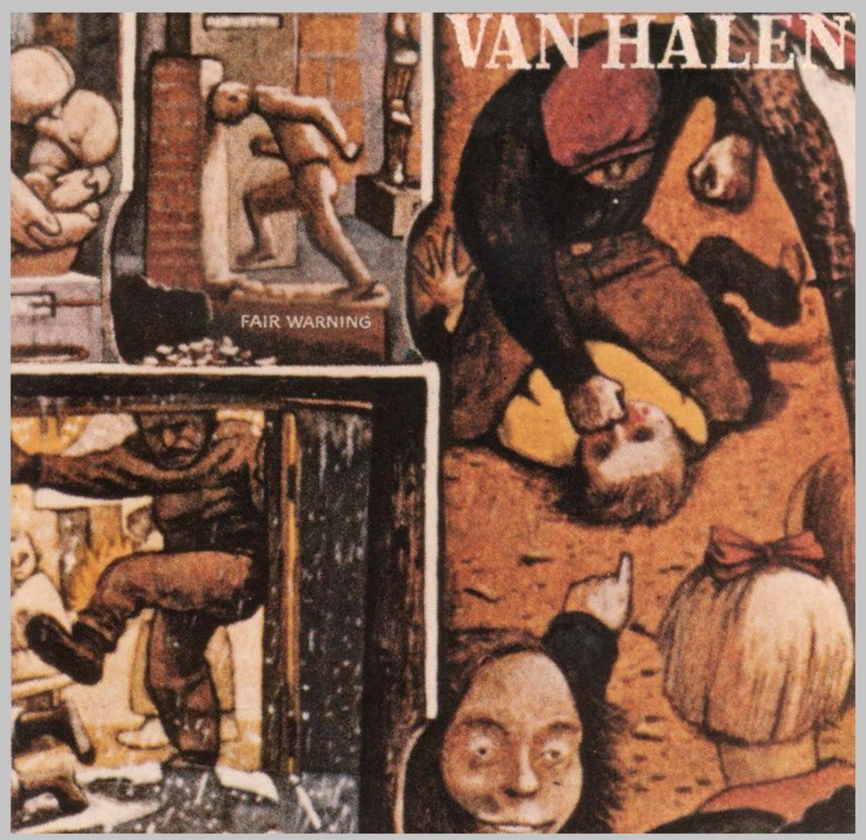
THE LEGACY

MEGAFORCE WORLDWIDE 1987

Although never as popular as Metallica, Anthrax or Slayer, Testament remain lauded in thrash metal circles. This debut ticks all the boxes: lyrics addressing the occult, nuclear war and global destruction and, in Joe Satriani guitar student Alex Skolnick, the California quartet showcased one of metal's most admired modern-day players. The likes of *Burnt Offerings*, *Apocalyptic City* and *First Strike Is Deadly* are thrash classics.

FIRST PRESS £17

NIELS VAN IPEREN/GETTY



28
VAN HALEN
FAIR WARNING
WARNER BROS 1981

Van Halen's early party metal often lacked gravitas, but with clown prince Dave Lee Roth and guitar whizz Eddie Van Halen at full pelt, they had enormous charm. Fourth LP *Fair Warning* faltered commercially – perhaps because it's truly heavy. From opener *Mean Street* to *Unchained* (one of *the* classic metal riffs), this was an uncompromising, almost nasty LP.

FIRST PRESS £15

27
SEPULTURA
CHAOS A.D.
ROADRUNNER 1993

Metal culture is far reaching, and none were more reflective of their nation than Brazil's Sepultura. With native rhythms and covers woven into their groove-metal sound, Max Cavalera even tackled his own country's domestic politics head-on. Bizarrely, it was recorded at Rockfield Studio in South Wales. But that was Sepultura's USP – they travelled well.

FIRST PRESS £28

26
DIAMOND HEAD
LIGHTNING TO THE NATIONS
HAPPYFACE 1980

From the original NWOBHM movement, Diamond Head are best known for being one of Lars Ulrich's favourite bands. But this debut was impressive: *Sounds* claimed it featured as many great riffs as the first four Sabbath LPs. *Lightning…* is a stepping stone between classic 70s metal and the intensity of the 80s.

FIRST PRESS £120

25
RAINBOW
RISING
OYSTER 1976

After Deep Purple Mk III crumbled, even Ritchie Blackmore jumped ship and started this new band with Ronnie James Dio. Again, like Purple, Rainbow were hardly 'pure' metal, but the sheer grandeur and escapism of this riffathon (its zenith is the *Kashmir*-like *Stargazer*) made *Rising* a headbanger's favourite. A 1970s high point and an epic concoction of classical-influenced soloing and fantasy.

FIRST PRESS £18

24
OZZY OSBOURNE
BLIZZARD OF OZZ
JET 1980

Following his drunken, acrimonious sacking by Black Sabbath, the double-O's stock was so low that he had trouble getting a new record deal. He hit back by recruiting guitarist Randy Rhoads from also-rans Quiet Riot: not only could Rhoads shred like EVH, he was classically schooled. The result was old-school Ozzy wailing with a much modern sheen. Rhoads died in a plane crash in 1982.

FIRST PRESSING £30

23
MASTODON
LEVIATHAN
RELAPSE 2004

Aptly named, *Leviathan* nods heavily to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, even if it's not 100 per cent a concept album. The music cuts seamlessly between older-style boogie and modern hardcore, but there's a soul here: Mastodon soon became known as a 'thinking man's metal band' and 'the future of metal'. The mysterious *Leviathan* is still a beast of an LP.

FIRST PRESS £50 (IMPORT)

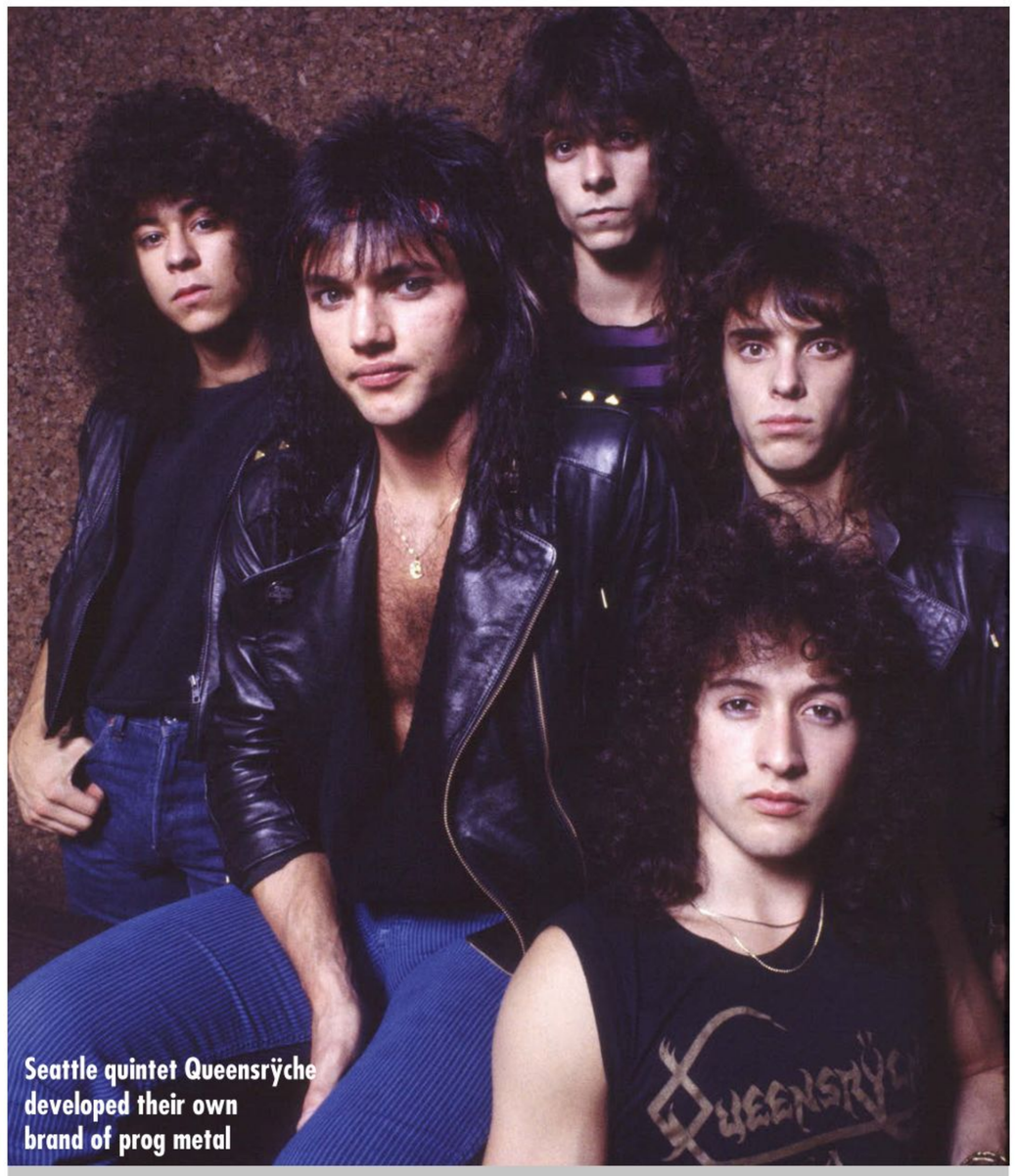
22
SLIPKNOT
VOL. 3: THE SUBLIMINAL VERSES
ROADRUNNER 2004

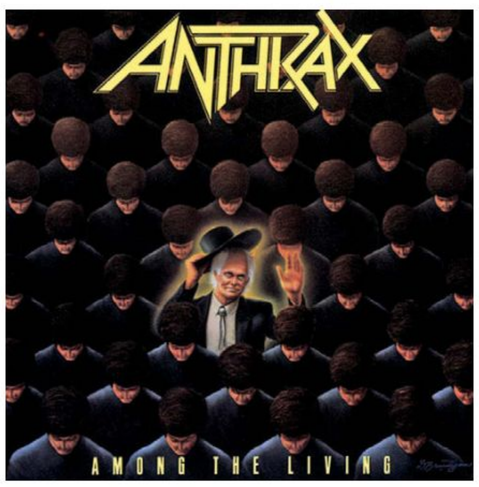
While the facemasks suggested the Des Moines collective were something of a novelty act, they actually turned out to be supreme musicians – just what metalheads want. And, of course, they genuinely scared parents. Lyrically, this doesn't stray far from 101 nu-metal self-loathing, but Rick Rubin brings a crushing production to the likes of *Duality* and *Before I Forget*. This is brutal stuff.

FIRST PRESS £360 (IMPORT)

21
ALICE IN CHAINS
DIRT
COLUMBIA 1992

Of all the so-called grunge bands, AIC were one of the most challenging – their roots lay in classic metal rather than punk. Unlike most metal songs, though, AIC's were intensely personal, a sizeable portion of *Dirt* being about frontman Layne Staley's eventually fatal heroin addiction. Jerry Cantrell shovelled riff over riff in a disorientating tumble, resulting in a deeply unsettling LP. **FIRST PRESS** £60


Seattle quintet Queensrÿche developed their own brand of prog metal



20
ANTHRAX
AMONG THE LIVING
ISLAND 1987

A thrash-metal landmark, Anthrax's Scott Ian says of this LP: "We were in our element. We were killing it and we had all the confidence in the world." Studio rows ensued with producer Eddie 'Jimi Hendrix' Kramer over the sound, but the NYC band eventually got their way.
FIRST PRESS £15

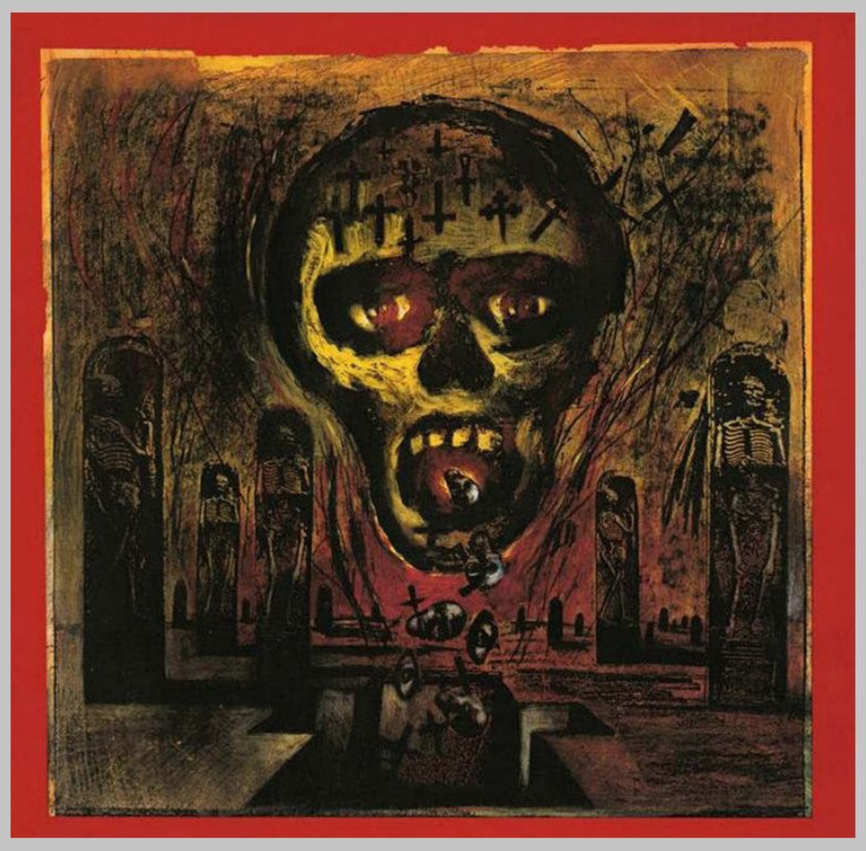
19
TOOL
LATERALUS
ZOMBA 2001

Metal's most perfectionist band are worth the wait for devotees. This prog-metal opus nods to Pink Floyd, Rush and King Crimson in a complex collage few other bands would attempt. Pretentious? Of course it is. But if you want metal that peels back layers with every listen, this is surely it.
FIRST PRESS £45 (2LP)

18
QUEENSRŸCHE
OPERATION: MINDCRIME
EMI-MANHATTAN 1998

An acclaimed 'progressive metal' rock opera, *Operation: Mindcrime* has even been compared critically to *Tommy* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon* for metalheads. The musicianship is just as ambitious as the concept, making this far from "just dumb metal". Rush production stalwart Peter Collins lives up to his 'Mr Big' nickname on one of metal's most acclaimed ever releases. Lofty and essential.
FIRST PRESS £20 (2LP)

CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY



17
SLAYER
SEASONS IN THE ABYSS
DEF AMERICAN 1990
The final LP in a super-strong triptych, *Seasons...* saw Slayer change. They couldn't possibly play faster, so moved toward more traditional metal with the guitar work of Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman mixing in more textures and deft soloing. The band also scaled back their occult obsessions, finding more tangible horrors in real life war and human weakness.
FIRST PRESS £35

16
DEEP PURPLE
MACHINE HEAD
PURPLE 1972
Were Purple really heavy metal? These days, you'd just call them 'classic' or 'hard rock', but when *Machine Head* emerged it was mighty. Ritchie Blackmore's classical influences came through (*Highway Star*'s solo is a nod to Bach), *Lazy* is more blues, *Space Truckin'* simply rocks... This put Purple in Sabbath's league.
FIRST PRESS £30

15
KORN
FOLLOW THE LEADER
EPIC 1998
Emerging from the rap/nu-metal explosion, KoЯn soon honed their sound into something unique for the genre: drastically downtuned guitars, a lurching hip-hop influence and swathes of cartharsis. The songs here are almost incidental – KoЯn were all about an assault of sound, and this is arguably their peak.
FIRST PRESS £20 (2LP)

14
SLAYER
REIGN IN BLOOD
LONDON 1986
The opposite of sludgy doom metal, Slayer were ridiculously frenetic: opener *Angel Of Death* is 210bpm. "We wanted to be faster than everybody else," said 'singer' Tom Araya, while Rick Rubin oversaw a stripped production that was like a boot in the gut. It's ludicrous that some would classify this and Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet* (also released in 1986) in the same genre.
FIRST PRESS £25

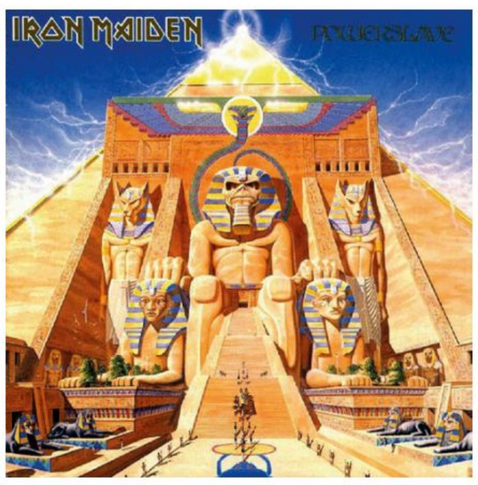
13
OPETH
BLACKWATER PARK
MUSIC FOR NATIONS
2001
Mikael Åkerfeldt's growling betrays the Swede's death metal roots, but some of the music here – they call their creations 'movements' not 'songs' – is symphonic. Crisply produced by Porcupine Tree's Steve Wilson, it's a wildly inventive LP, from the Arabian-flavoured *Bleak* to the folky *Dirge For November*. It's metal, but not as you know it.
FIRST PRESS £75

12
JUDAS PRIEST
SCREAMING FOR VENGEANCE
CBS 1982
Following the commercial moves of *British Steel* and *Point Of Entry*, Priest returned to a rootsier headbanging fest with this, their first LP to go Double Platinum. It lacks crossover hits (ie, *Breaking The Law*), but it is the better for it. It's old-school metal at the dawn of thrash, with *Electric Eye* and *You've Got Another Thing Coming* both all-time JP classics.
FIRST PRESS £18

11
PANTERA
VULGAR DISPLAY OF POWER
PWL INTERNATIONAL 1992
The artwork tells you all you need to know: this is a punch in the face. Built around brothers Dimebag Darrell (guitar) and Vinnie Paul (drums), Pantera took a while to get going – this was LP number six – but once they discovered their heavy, heavy groove here, the Texans set the template for 90s metal. Typical track? *Fucking Hostile*.
FIRST PRESS £35

10
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE
EPIC 1992
'Rap metal' threw up a lot of garbage, but don't blame RATM. The trad metal expertise of Tom Morello made for a broad appeal and coupled with Zack De La Rocha's righteous fury you have an LP that's a classic outside its notional genre. *Killing In The Name* and *Bullet In The Head* became anthems.
FIRST PRESS £40

9
JUDAS PRIEST
SAD WINGS OF DESTINY
GULL 1976
Judas Priest consolidated their metal credentials on this second LP. It was a commercial flop, but the right people were listening. Megadeth's Dave Mustaine said his brother-in-law punched him in the face for doing so. Mustaine called this a turning point, where he chose a career in metal as "revenge".
FIRST PRESS £44



8
IRON MAIDEN
POWERSLAVE
EMI 1984
Maiden were on such a roll in the 80s, it's tricky to pick one LP over the other. But *Powerslave* packs all their trademarks into one package. The hits *Aces High* and *2 Minutes To Midnight* were the commercial slams. Then there's the epic *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*, a prog-metal blowout adapted from the Samuel Taylor Coleridge poem. **FIRST PRESS** £16

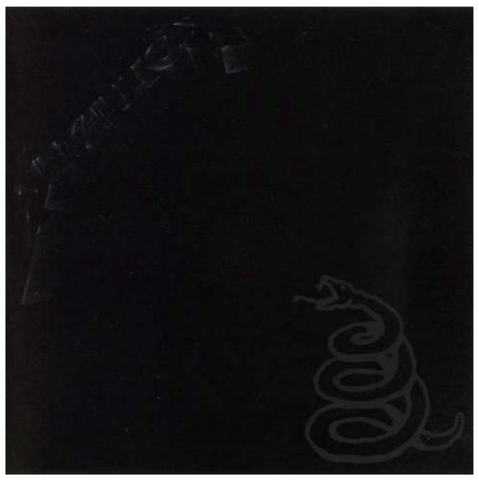
7
MEGADETH
RUST IN PEACE
CAPITOL 1990
Angry Dave Mustaine, sacked by Angry Metallica early on, came of age on this angry second album – it was even Grammy nominated. As the highly politicised frontman growls his concerns about global warming, nukes, religion and more, he and newly recruited guitarist Marty Friedman (now a J-Pop writer, fact!) weave a complex guitar assault. To some, this is the beginning of 'tech metal'.
FIRST PRESS £30

6
DIO
HOLY DIVER
VERTIGO 1983
The late Ronnie James Dio is considered one of metal's greatest ever vocalists for his range and 'castle metal'/ fantasy obsessions. He'd earned his dues before this solo debut, passing through the ranks of Rainbow and Sabbath, and he here assembled a superb band, notably Irish wunderkind guitarist Vivian Campbell (who is currently picking up a huge pay-cheque for not doing much in the latest incarnation of Def Leppard).
FIRST PRESS £20

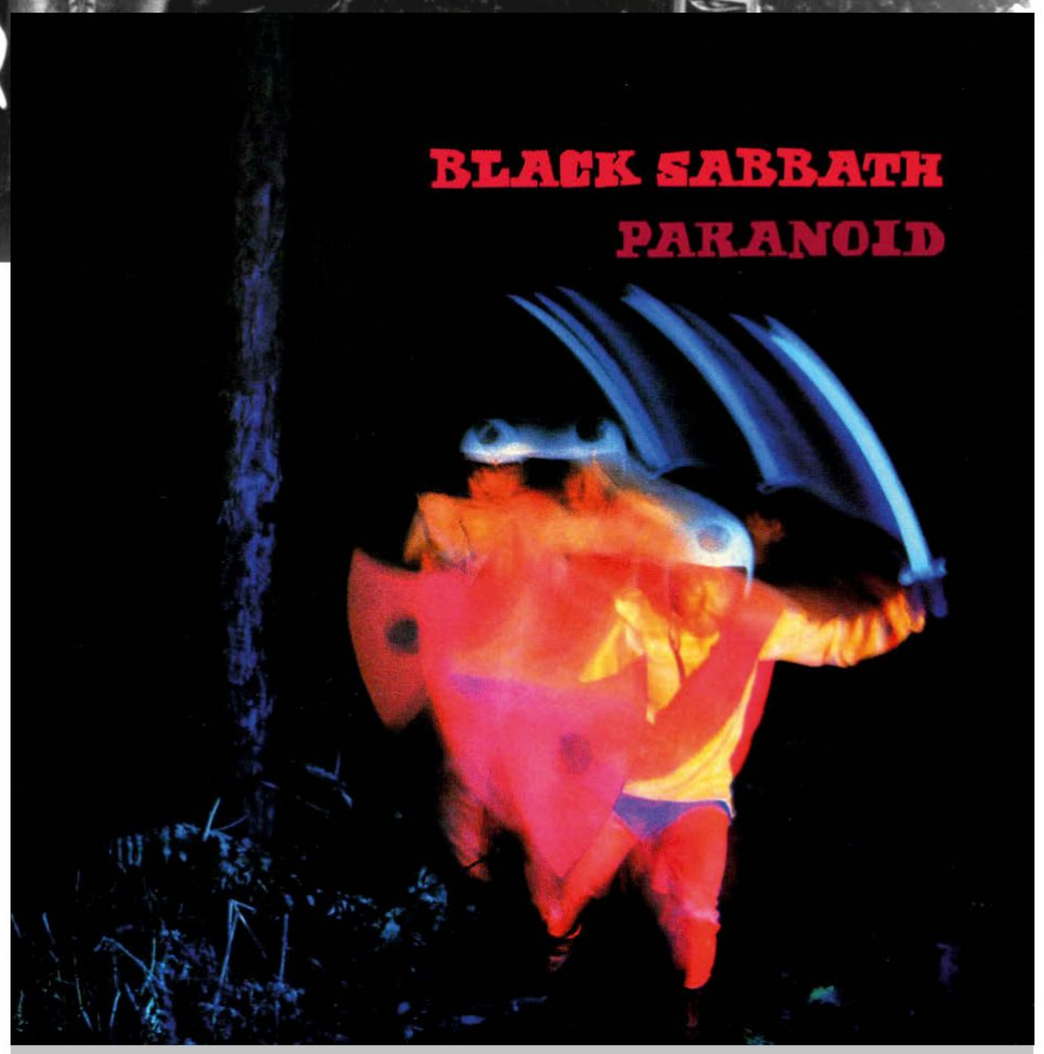
5
METALLICA
MASTER OF PUPPETS
MUSIC FOR NATIONS 1986
Metallica's third album is considered seminal: it's here they nail their dynamic quiet/loud, fast/ slow dynamics and, for metal, sophisticated writing. They constructed songs strictly from riffs, with words added last, making for ever-shifting sonics – the Popmatters website has called it a metal version of Phil Spector's Wall of Sound and it gave 'thrash' an across-the-board acclaim. Superstardom was coming.
FIRST PRESS £30

4
BLACK SABBATH
BLACK SABBATH
VERTIGO 1970
Heavy metal's pregnancy and a revolutionary release. There are still flashes of Sabbath's blues and psych roots (*The Wizard*), even drummer Bill Ward's jazz influences, but Ozzy Osbourne's plaintive wail and Tony Iommi's riffs were unlike anything else you could hear: it was a bolt from the black. It's not perfect, Side Two meanders, but for a day's work, it's the most influential metal LP ever.
FIRST PRESS £400

3
IRON MAIDEN
THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST
EMI 1982
The sacking of Paul Di'Anno and replacing him with Bruce Dickinson proved pivotal for the 80s metallers. Dickinson's "air raid siren" vocals arrived just as Maiden were perfecting their galloping guitar duels and also exhibiting a keen commercial, melodic edge. *...Beast* went to No.1 and served up a Top 10 single in *Run To The Hills*. LP burning protests in the USA only added to their teen appeal.
FIRST PRESS £25



2
METALLICA
METALLICA
VERTIGO 1991
Also known as 'the Black Album', it remains a controversial LP for some purist fans, but we'd wager Metallica will take the brickbats. Producer Bob Rock worked hard on streamlining the quartet's sound and the outcome was epicness – *Enter Sandman, The Unforgiven, Nothing Else Matters, Sad But True*... genuine chart hits stacked up. According to estimates, it's sold 16m in the USA: that's more than Springsteen's *Born In The USA*.
FIRST PRESS £40



1
BLACK SABBATH
PARANOID
VERTIGO 1970
Sabbath's quickly recorded second salvo was another five-star classic. With time to refine their sound, its loud, minor-key dirges were more focused and in *Iron Man* and *War Pigs* they served two of the most identifiable riffs in metaldom. An unlikely hit in the title track grew their audience massively... Sabbath's proper breakthrough and metal's defining album.
FIRST PRESS £250

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

Classic Album

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young

DÉJÀ VU

Hippy relic created by four warring egos or a timeless Americana classic? Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's second album sold by the bucketload, yet 50 years on it still continues to divide opinion. **Ben Wardle** gets *Déjà Vu*

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young

Dallas Taylor & Greg Reeves

Déjà vu

CLASSIC ALBUM 67 DÉJÀ VU

A promo shot of the band taken in the garden of David Crosby's rental home by Tom Gundelfinger

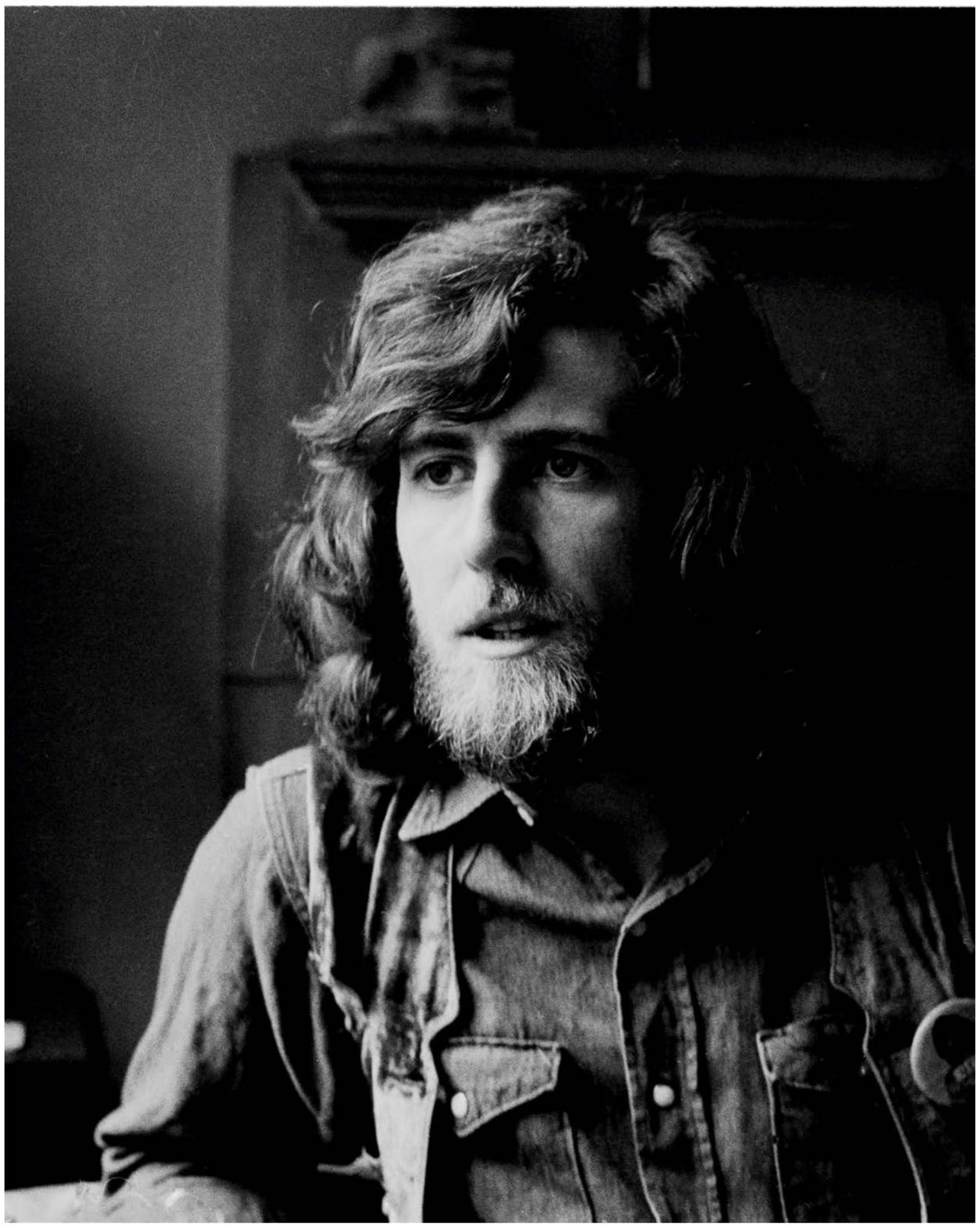
"When we did our first CSN record, we were very much in love with each other and each other's music. By the time of *Déjà Vu* that had all turned to shit."

Graham Nash's perspective on the eight million-selling second album he made with David Crosby, Stephen Stills plus new addition Neil Young was always going to be biased. Talking to Robert Sandall for a *Q* feature in 1992, Nash was trying to sum up the fractured and competitive relationship between the four members of the folk-rock supergroup. But is a harmonious studio atmosphere mandatory for a great record? Surely, many of the greatest albums were created by artists who weren't exactly seeing eye-to-eye – think *Abbey Road*, *Rumours*, *Never Mind The Bollocks…* or *The Wall*. Now, 50 years since its release, is *Déjà Vu* just an old hippy relic or a true counterculture classic?

To understand how *Déjà Vu* was made, it's crucial to look at the nature of the CSN sound and how it came about. While touring the US with Mancunian moptops The Hollies, Nash, already feeling restricted by the pop format, had fallen in love with the burgeoning West Coast counterculture. In a feature he wrote for the *Daily Mail* in 2013, Nash described meeting Crosby and Stills: "they were refugees, like me, from successful, broken bands". Sacked from The Byrds because of his bad attitude, David Crosby was now collaborating with Stephen Stills, who in May 1968 had just dissolved Buffalo Springfield. The trio became immediate friends, but the moment of epiphany took a few weeks. In the liner notes to the *CSN* boxset, Nash recalls: "Me being a harmony freak and being the high harmony in The Hollies, when David and Stephen were singing *You Don't Have To Cry*, they were singing the two parts and they started to show off because they wanted to show me that they had worked on it very diligently. It sounded great… I had by then a rough idea of what my part would be… When we heard ourselves for the first time, it was truly astounding that these three people from such diverse backgrounds can meld and come together with that sound." "We just knew that it was good," says Crosby in the same notes. "We had been in bands where we had done two-part harmony and some three-part, but there was nothing like the mix that happened when the three of us sang. We had never heard anything like that. It delighted us." "It was one of those moments," reflected Stills.

This eureka moment, combined with their genuine camaraderie, carried the band through the end of 1968 and into recording their debut for Reprise in 1969. They were also business-minded enough to make sure that they had proper management and live representation in the form of Joni Mitchell/Neil Young hip-executive Elliot Roberts and slick operator David Geffen. "We needed somebody sharky," said

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY



Graham Nash was the peacemaker in the band, but didn't always succeed

Crosby of the latter. Indeed, it took both representatives to free Crosby from his Byrds deal with Columbia and negotiate with Atlantic's Jerry Wexler and Ahmet Ertegun. But no amount of business acumen would have fuelled the project without the motor of friendship. In his essential document of the LA singer-songwriter scene *Hotel California*, Barney Hoskyns quotes Elliot Roberts' employee Allison Crane. "You couldn't get these guys to work together if they didn't like each other… it was the love relationships, the hanging out, the smoking dope, the sailing with David."

SPIRIT OF HARMONY

When *Crosby, Stills & Nash* came out in May 1969, it was a game changer, remaining in the charts until 1971. It signalled the end of British invasion-style jangly guitars, and offered an alternative to Free, Cream and Hendrix-style blues-rock. By the time *Déjà Vu* was released in March the following year, it had company: James Taylor's *Sweet Baby James*, *12 Songs* by Randy Newman, Joni Mitchell's *Ladies of The Canyon*, *Writer* by Carole King, as well as *Tom Rush*, *Elton John* and *McCartney*. Typically, Dylan avoided being part of this introspectival and released an album of covers called, archly, *Self Portrait*; it didn't make any difference: the singer-songwriter had arrived.

"There was nothing like the mix when the three of us sang. It delighted us"
DAVID CROSBY

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

The songs

CORE PERSONNEL

David Crosby Vocals, guitar
Stephen Stills Vocals, guitar, keyboards, bass, percussion
Graham Nash Vocals, guitar, keyboards, percussion
Neil Young Vocals, guitar, keyboards, harmonica

MAIN PRODUCTION CREDITS

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young

ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL

Dallas Taylor Drums (All tracks except 8), tambourine (Track 2)
Greg Reeves Bass (Tracks 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10)
Jerry Garcia Pedal steel guitar (Track 2)
John Sebastian Harmonica (Track 6)

RECORDED

July 1969 to January 1970 Wally Heider's Studio, Los Angeles & San Francisco

RELEASED

11 March 1970

1 Carry On

Stills put this together in response to Nash saying they didn't have an album opener. It's actually a mash-up of Buffalo Springfield track *Questions* (from their final posthumous 1968 LP *Last Time Around*) and a new track. Then, according to drummer Dallas Taylor, Stills "stuck them onto a jam we'd had out in the studio a few nights before, me on drums and Stephen on a Hammond B-3 organ." It was the only single released from the album which failed to chart.

2 Teach Your Children

According to road manager Ron Stone, "Graham Nash was, and still is, the only sane person in that ensemble." He was also the peacemaker who kept the bubbling tempers of Crosby and Stills from boiling over and maintained the collaborative spirit amidst all the egos. Writing about this song in the liner notes to the 1989 *CSN* boxset, he is generous to Stills who "put a country beat to it and turned it into a hit record." It would have made No. 1 in the US if the band hadn't rush-released the Young-penned *Ohio,* which pipped it to the post. He never complained about that either. Listen out for Jerry Garcia, who'd just learned to play pedal steel.

3 Almost Cut My Hair

Although rated by Neil Young ("It's really Crosby at what I think is his best," he told *Rolling Stone*) *...Hair* is the one song on the album which hasn't aged well. Yes, it's admirably all played live with no overdubs, which you'd expect Young to champion, but lyrically it reeks of patchouli, marijuana and navel-gazing. That said, the guitars, particularly Young's distinctive chug, sound timeless and imperial.

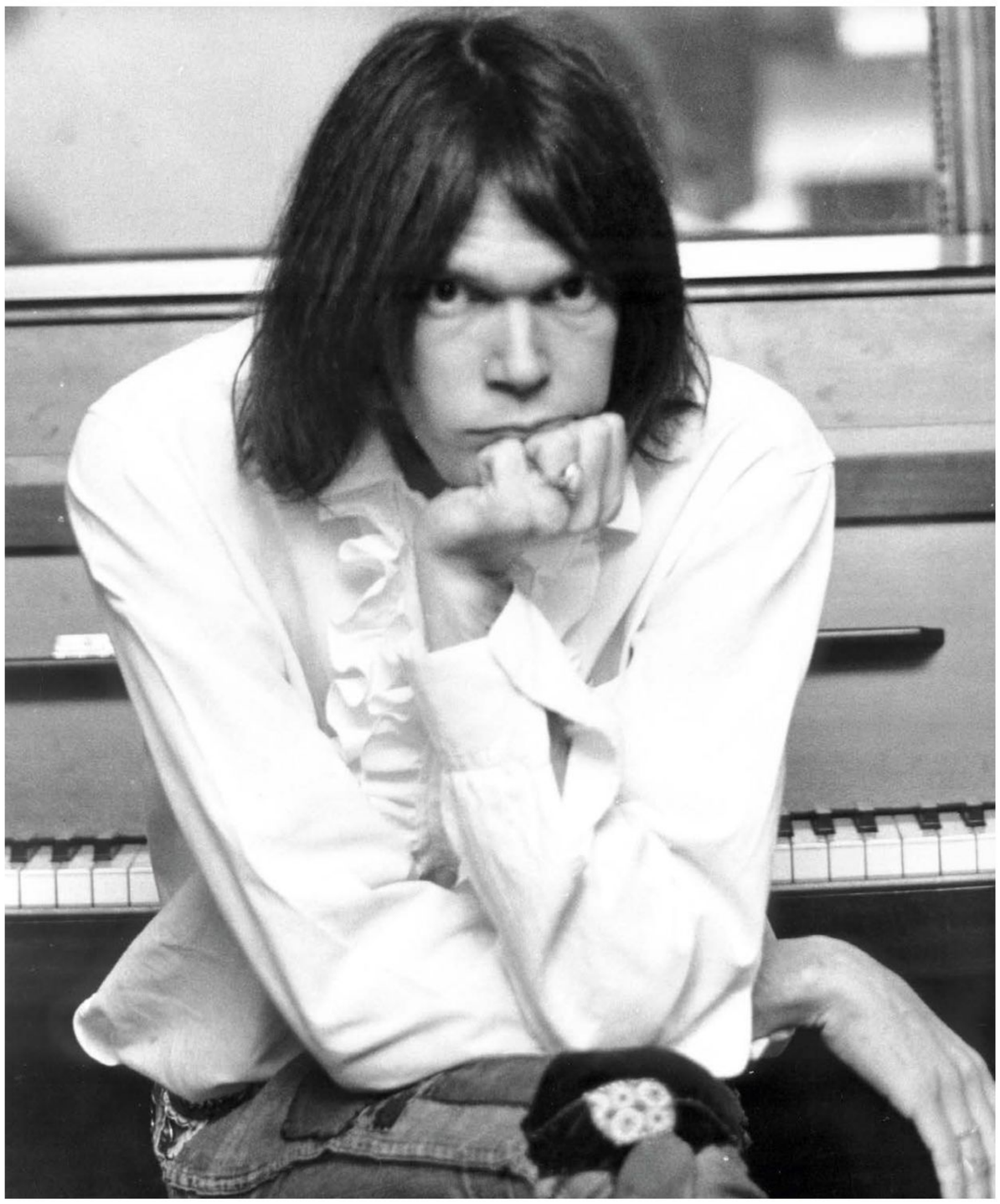
The songs
CONTINUED

4 Helpless
Possibly the best track on the album and reason alone for Neil Young to have joined the line-up. According to Hoskyns' *Hotel California*, Young spent a long time getting the other three to play less on the track and indeed it's initially the tranquillity of the recording that grabs the listener after the hippy barrage of *...Hair*. In the liner notes to *Decade*, Young recalls it being recorded at "about 4am when everyone got tired enough to play at my speed." For an extra treat, watch his notorious appearance in *The Last Waltz* playing it with The Band and Joni Mitchell – unfortunately, the large lump of cocaine hanging from his nostril has been edited out.

5 Woodstock
Despite, or perhaps because of, being some distance from the festival in a New York hotel bedroom, Joni Mitchell managed to enshrine the event for future generations. In the liner notes to the *CSN* boxset, she describes being "glued to the media", and because of that was able to write the song from a fan's perspective. It was the account given by boyfriend Nash, who'd played the festival with CSN&Y, which enabled her to capture it in song, and it was fitting that this became *Déjà Vu*'s lead-off single. Mitchell's own version came out on her third album, *Ladies Of The Canyon*, which hit the shops one month after *Déjà Vu*.

6 Déjà Vu
Crosby claimed that he could sing harmonies aged six and knew how to sail a boat from the very first time he boarded one: his only rationale for this was that he'd been someone else before. *Rolling Stone*'s April 30 1970 album review must have burst the former Byrd's bubble a little, "*Déjà Vu* has little or no tune and fails totally to capture the eerie feeling that accompanies a real déjà vu experience." Although, to be fair, if he had caught the "eerie feeling" of déjà vu in song, it may well have resulted in a copyright infringement lawsuit. Don't miss the spoonful of John Sebastian on harmonica at the end.

7 Our House
Early on in their relationship, Crosby introduced Nash to his girlfriend Joni Mitchell. Soon after, Nash was taken sick and Mitchell offered to play "Florence Nightingale" and look after him at her place on Lookout Mountain in Laurel Canyon. It worked. They quickly became a couple and you can almost picture Nash at the piano working on this while Joni waited to map out the chords to her own happy-home tune *Willy*. "She had a collection of multi-coloured glass in the window that would catch the light – the 'fiery gems'," wrote Nash. It's still one of the most poignant songs about settling down.



CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

Young's contract enabled him to maintain a parallel career with his new band, Crazy Horse

As sales of *Crosby, Stills & Nash* grew, Geffen, Roberts and the band realised that they would have to play live. On record, aside from Nash's and Crosby's guitar playing and drummer Dallas Taylor, it had been Stills who'd played everything else. How were they going to recreate their lush, layered sound onstage? In late spring of 1969, David Geffen arranged a strategy meeting in New York with Atlantic's Ahmet Ertegun and Stephen Stills. The record executive suggested the addition of Neil Young. "It still always shocks me that it was Stephen's call to invite Neil back into the fold, when he knew he wouldn't be able to intimidate him," Elliot Roberts told Jimmy McDonough in the latter's Young biography *Shakey*.

But somehow, Stills' overarching ambition enabled him to see past his insecurity about Young's talent and get the old Buffalo Springfield duelling guitars back together. Crosby had already subbed for Young in BS, but Nash was wary of someone he didn't know messing with their unique sound. When the two met Young, it was apparently his rendition of *Helpless* that convinced them both to let him in; Crosby recalled in *Uncut*, "By the time he finished, we were asking him if we could join his band."

The newly minted quartet played their first show in Chicago on 16 August, followed a day later by their second: Woodstock. "We're scared shitless," said Stills to the 400,000-strong mud-caked crowd. They pulled it off and soon after, Wally Heider's recently opened studio in San Francisco was booked and the band commenced recording. The stage was set for the perfect storm of ego, misunderstanding, arrogance, drugs and tragedy.

Stills, always convinced that he was the group's leader, had recently split from his partner Judy Collins. Now, with nothing to focus on other than the music, his single-minded drive and perfectionism, fuelled by mountains of cocaine, took over. The primary occupation during Stills' all-night sessions was overdubbing, which was diametrically opposed to Young's preferred working mode of playing live and maintaining audio authenticity. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* in April 1970, he criticised the first album for its overproduction, then moved on to *Déjà Vu*.

"And on this second album there are about five songs that sound like the first album […] it's just a different way of making records… I don't know how to really explain it 'cause it isn't my way." Only *Woodstock*, Crosby's *Almost Cut My Hair* and Young's *Helpless* were recorded as a band; every other track was put together in individual sessions, with the others coming in when needed. The group had gone straight to *The White Album* without passing Go.

Then in September, while driving their cats to the vet, Crosby's girlfriend Christine Hinton was killed in a car crash. Devastated and numbed by grief, he sought solace in heroin. In a 1970 interview with *Rolling Stone*, he confessed, "I was not at my best as a functioning person. I would sometimes come in to the studio and wind up crying, being completely unable to deal with it all." The escalating problems were not being addressed by the management either, as Hoskyns says: "The wall that Elliot Roberts erected around the sessions for *Déjà Vu* at Wally Heider's only made the competitiveness between the four men the more claustrophobic."

800 HOURS

Core member from the first album, drummer Dallas Taylor, appeared happy with Stills' all-nighters. "Whatever he'd decide to do, I'd be there," recalls Taylor in the *CSN* notes, "The sessions would go on all night, sometimes three or four days non-stop… we hid all the clocks so no one knew what time it was." One of LA's first heroin users, Taylor was by that time mainlining in the studio. He was also resentful of newcomer Young, whose contract was better than his despite the drummer's core-member status. This resulted in attempts to sabotage Young on stage by changing time signatures and would prompt Shakey to give him the boot before they returned to the studio to record *Ohio*.

Meanwhile Nash, despite finally getting to record his ode to perfect life with girlfriend Joni Mitchell *Our House* in November, was noticing cracks in its brickwork, as Mitchell's career ambitions led to her claustrophobia and resent at their relationship. Nash was additionally saddled with the job of ego-mediator. Drummer Denny Bruce told Hoskyns: "Nash had to work so hard to be the diplomat and keep things together in the group, he said that Stephen Stills some days could be judged to be insane." At one point, group relations reached crisis point and Nash called an emergency meeting between all band members to try to get everyone back on the same page. He ended up in tears.

But despite all the unhappiness, all the drugs and all the time (famously, Stills estimated that it took 800 hours), the album came together. Engineer Bill Halverson, who had recorded the first album and was the safe pair of hands who'd guided classics by Hendrix, Cream and Johnny Cash, managed the seemingly impossible task of negotiating between his hyper-competitive charges.

And despite the massive weight of expectation bearing down on it (Atlantic shipped a million advance copies), it was immediately popular with the public. It captured the Zeitgeist in a way that only a handful of albums do every decade. Ultimately, *Déjà Vu* would spawn four hit singles, only three of which were actually on the album. Lead-off track, the Joni Mitchell-penned *Woodstock,* was the biggest hit, reaching number 11 in the Billboard chart as the album came out. Then came *Teach Your Children* in May, which had all the momentum of getting to No. 1. It stalled, however, because in response to the horrific shooting of four students by police during a protest at Kent State University in May, Neil Young wrote *Ohio*. Atlantic released it in June and it reached No. 14. The final hit was Nash's *Our House* in September.

The press were not as kind as the public. Despite some positive words from the pop papers such as *Record Mirror* ("A beautifully produced album. All the immaculate four-part harmonies, pretty guitar parts and relevant arranging are there.") it was

Stephen Stills always believed that he was the group's leader

> **"It always shocks me that it was Stephen's call to invite Neil back into the fold"**
> **ELLIOT ROBERTS**

JACK ROBINSON/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY

The songs CONTINUED

8 4+20

Very much a Stephen Stills solo track and very representative of the way that *Déjà Vu* differed from the debut in that each member went their own way. Stills wanted to hold it for his solo album (*Stephen Stills*, which came out in November) but maintains, "the guys insisted we use it." He wanted Crosby and Nash to sing harmony, but according to him, "they told me they wouldn't dare touch it."

9 Country Girl

Despite making claims to being a combination of three songs, *Whiskey Boot Hill, Down, Down, Down* and *Country Girl (I Think You're Pretty)*, this works as a complete song. It could have fit easily onto 1969's *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere,* but really benefits from the crisp distinctive harmonies that are the CSN USP. It also has melodic and stylistic touches of Buffalo Springfield's similarly portmanteau number *Broken Arrow*.

10 Everybody I Love You

The only songwriting collaboration on the whole album, this is very much CSN by numbers. Although penned by Nash and Stills, it's got the guitar wig-out, the Crosby and Nash soaring harmonies and Stills' rock call and response "Oh yeah… oh yes it is!" outro. It's not great, but by the end of Side 2, CSN&Y could do no wrong.

Despite monumental clashes of ego, the album went on to sell seven million copies in the US alone

Rolling Stone who set the tone: wide-eyed hippy enthusiasm for the debut replaced by 1970s cynicism. Despite finding merit in *Helpless*, *Carry On* and *Teach Your Children*, their review calls much of *Déjà Vu* "undistinguished" and rails at the "absurdity of its pretensions", using the cover art as metaphor, "The heralded leather cover turns out to be nothing more than crimpled cardboard […] *Déjà Vu* would like to convince you that it has roots deep in the American soil. But a closer inspection reveals that its tap root is firmly implanted in the urban commercial asphalt." *Rolling Stone* also published an accompanying comic story of what 'heads' might think about *Déjà Vu*, making a connection between lethargy-inducing dope smoking and listening to CSN&Y. "Open yer ears. Yeh, man, it's a drain, a real energy drain, but it feels so fucking good, man."

Regardless of this and despite fifth single *Carry On* failing to chart, the album went on to sell seven million in the US alone. All four band members released solo albums in its slipstream – Young's *After The Goldrush* in September, Stephen Stills' self-titled debut in November, Crosby's debut *If Only I Could Remember My Name* in February 1971 and Nash's debut *Songs For Beginners* in May. So what does *Déjà Vu* sound like 50 years later? Well, there are some songs which still retain the magic, but it's the debut that is perhaps more worthy of the term 'classic'. In a radio interview just one year after *Déjà Vu*'s release, Crosby summed it up. "The first album, you put it on in the middle of the afternoon and you're boogying and laughing by the time it's over. It doesn't happen with the second one." ●

"Nash had to work so hard to keep things together in the group"
DENNY BRUCE

TOM COPI/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

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PETER NOBLE/REDFERNS/GETTY

Iggy Pop's 80s were defined by quick flashes of genius followed by longer patches of disappointment

Iggy Pop entered the 1980s as a post-punk pioneer. What followed was a wild decade of wanton excess and sonic exploration. Daniel Dylan Wray hears the war stories of some of the musicians who tried (and failed) to keep up with Iggy along the way

There are few artists whose impact reverberated quite as fiercely through the musical underground of the 1970s as Iggy Pop's. After essentially laying down the blueprint for punk rock, by 1974 his seminal outfit The Stooges had collapsed and soon scores of artists picked up the baton to be deemed *the* artists of their generation as Pop watched from the sidelines.

By 1977, almost a decade after The Stooges' debut, Pop had released not one but two solo albums in collaboration with David Bowie that once again leapfrogged over the current pack of musicians and supposed Zeitgeist. As countless bands were still being awoken by primitive thrashing three-chord punk, Pop had already moved past that into dark, brooding, often melancholic tones. The almost industrial-like groggy grooves that gargled and buzzed throughout *The Idiot* acted as a template for the incoming wave of post-punk bands, much like Stooges albums had done for the punk generation all those years earlier.

After the under-appreciated 1979 album *New Values* wrapped up a decade of massive influence and unparalleled work, but with little commercial success, Iggy faced a new decade ahead signposted with uncertainty.

For his 1980 album, *Soldier*, Pop brought in an almost entirely new band, including the Sex Pistols' original bass player Glen Matlock. "I was sitting at home after I'd just broken up the Rich Kids thinking, 'what on earth am I going to do now? Wouldn't it be great if the phone rang?' I'm not kidding you, two minutes later it rang and it was Iggy Pop's manager. He put Iggy on the phone and they were in town and invited me for a drink. Next thing I know, I'm rehearsing with them and off on tour. I wish it happened like that all the time."

James Williamson, the *Raw Power*-era Stooges member, was brought back in to produce and play guitar. "Williamson was in the control room with a bottle of vodka and his Les Paul, playing so, so loudly," Matlock says. "I don't know how he heard anything. I think he had a gun that he was waving around." The vodka-gulping Williamson did supposedly have an air pistol he liked to brandish in one hand, with an ever-diminishing bottle of Smirnoff in the other.

Barry Andrews of XTC had been brought in on keyboards for the session, but remembers problems setting in before they even got to the studio. "There was something missing at the top of the hierarchy, Williamson and Iggy really, they needed to spearhead the mission. We needed some leadership. Some directorial vision. It became rapidly apparent that this was not to be provided and even more so once we got to the studio."

BIG COCKS AND CIGARETTES

The studio was a rural one in Wales and when David Bowie turned up things became more fraught. "I'd done my bass tracks and went back to London," recalls Matlock. "When I returned all hell had broken loose." Williamson had disliked the Bowie mix of *Raw Power* and felt Bowie exploited The Stooges. "I don't think he was that keen on Bowie. Williamson thought he was a bit of a tosser to be honest," Matlock says.

"There was a standoff about Bowie trying to present alternative lyrics and Williamson had had enough. He stormed out of the studio but not only the studio, he left the country, went back to America and left the music business to train as an electrical engineer and never picked up a guitar again, until Iggy called him up decades later to rejoin The Stooges."

> IT'S KIND OF AN ANTI-ACHIEVEMENT TO MAKE SOMETHING SO MEDIOCRE

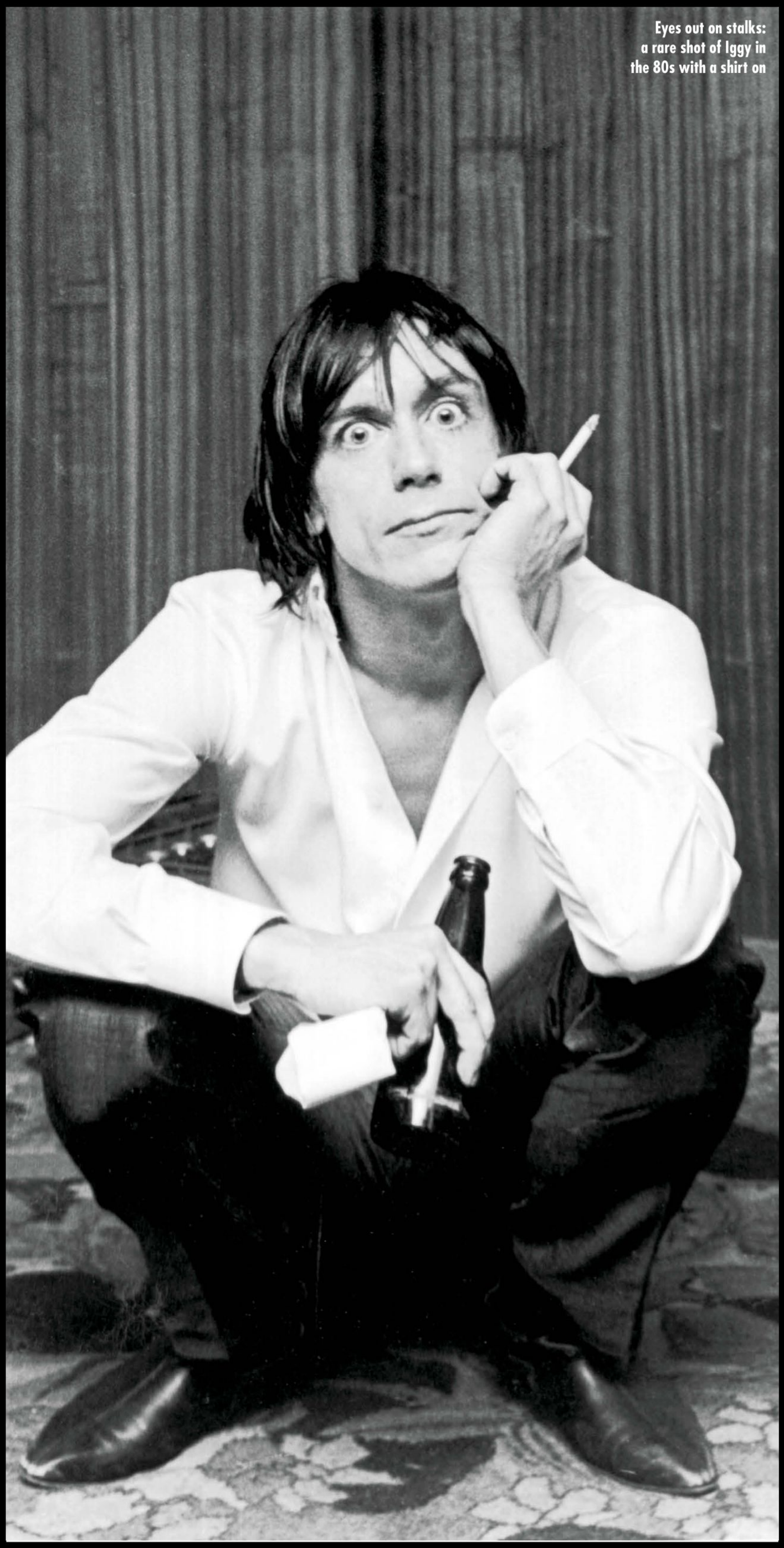
Andrews remembers an "un-ignorable and increasing tension between Williamson and Iggy" that had been brewing, which resulted in Pop firing Williamson. "It was becoming apparent that there was no juice coming from anywhere. No-one was creating anything or flying the plane. Then there was that David Bowie bloke who just swanned in, cracked a can of lager, told us some scandalous stories about gangsters, huge cocks and royalty and then laid out some directorial vision on us."

Soon, Bowie left the studio after more chaos. Steve New had been brought in on guitar and his girlfriend Patti Palladin was present too. "At about three in the morning we ran out of cigarettes," Matlock remembers. "Patti went to her room, Bowie followed her and Steve followed Bowie. To all intents and purposes, Steve thought Bowie was chatting her up, so he took exception and punched Bowie down the stairs. Then Bowie split. However, it turned out, I found out years later, that Bowie was chatting up Patti not because he fancied her but because he thought she had a packet of cigarettes stashed somewhere."

Andrews remembers the aftermath, although doesn't recall any punching incident. "There was just a couple of us left there in this strange, bleak after-world. In the middle of wintry, muddy Wales in an almost empty studio. Iggy couldn't seem to nail his vocals and we couldn't leave till he had. I felt like I was in a Samuel Beckett play. Some young bloke turned up who looked like a coke dealer but was actually Iggy's new manager. He'd been brought in to salvage the project." Andrews reflects back on it being an odd situation to end up in. "It was weird. How come it had got to this? All the firepower was there. Surely plenty of dosh. Why was it now a salvage job?"

Matlock also suggests that the final mix of the album was impacted by what went on at the studio. "Steve was going to come to America with us, but he never turned up because he thought Iggy was annoyed with him about punching Bowie. He wasn't, he thought it was funny, but he was very annoyed that he'd pulled out of coming to America. That's why he mixed out Steve's guitar parts, when we mixed it in New York."

Matlock has some fondness for the record, some of his own songs were used by Iggy on the album, but Andrews remains disappointed with the wasted potential. "We were all sick of it by the end," he says. "It had gone on for far too long and we were disappointed that instead of having a *Lust For Life* or *The Idiot* on our CVs it was going to be this turkey. Given the



Eyes out on stalks: a rare shot of Iggy in the 80s with a shirt on

VIRGINIA TURBETT/REDFERNS/GETTY

Pop Music

FIVE VITAL ALBUMS FROM IGGY'S 80S CATALOGUE

SOLDIER
1980, ARISTA
An ostensible super group put together comprising members of XTC, Patti Smith Group, the Sex Pistols and Tangerine Dream. Plus Simple Minds and David Bowie if you include backing vocal contributions.
DISCOGS £8

PARTY
1981, ARISTA
A songwriting collaboration with Patti Smith Group's Ivan Král. It's a deliberate reach for commercial success, so much so that The Monkees' producer Tommy Boyce was brought in to help make that happen.
DISCOGS £6

ZOMBIE BIRDHOUSE
1982, CHRYSALIS
Pop's most experimental solo album of the decade, arguably of his career. Featuring members of Blondie, it fuses new wave, post-punk and free-form lyricism.
DISCOGS £8

BLAH-BLAH-BLAH
1986, A&M
Slick, polished, radio-friendly, no drums. This is as typical a 1980s production as you get from Iggy, with a big helping hand from David Bowie.
DISCOGS £7

INSTINCT
1988, A&M
Straight-up hard rock in collaboration with the Sex Pistols' Steve Jones. Big brash guitars and chunky blasts of noise. Often seen as Iggy's heavy metal album.
DISCOGS £8

greatness of Iggy and all the talent employed, I think it's a kind of anti-achievement to make something so mediocre."

In 2015, James Williamson looked back on the project and expressed regret at even getting involved. "I should have never taken that job. It was recorded in a studio that I didn't want to be in, with music that was half-baked and with musicians I didn't respect. It was my own damn fault it didn't work out." When asked about Bowie's role in his exit, he replied: "Fuck Bowie. His showing up was just the last of many frustrations with being there."

Matlock went on to tour the album, but Andrews did not. Matlock then took a solo deal and left the touring band. "I loved playing with Iggy, but there's only so many times you can play *I Wanna Be Your Dog*," he says. "Or see him stood there with his back to the audience getting ready to pull his old man out. I must have seen his dick more times than anybody else." Pop was dropped from his record label after *Soldier*.

A less forgettable album followed with 1981's *Party*, and Blondie's Clem Burke joined Pop's touring band for that album, the results of which ended up on a DVD many years later: *Live In San Fran 1981*. "The mandate from Iggy was to play as loud and as fast as possible," Burke recalls. "It was anything goes. On that tour, Iggy was wearing a motorcycle cap and a motorcycle jacket with a leather mini skirt and stockings. His tour manager used to have to lay out his nylons for him." By this stage, Pop had been using and abusing various drugs for many years, in varying degrees of severity, and Burke recalls the tour being a wild one. "The rider was no food allowed backstage," he remembers. "Only booze and drugs. No blow, no show. He was burning the candle at both ends for sure." Burke recalls Pop not eating for days on end and then stocking up on meals on the odd day off. "We'd go to dinner and he'd order three meals at once. That said, he'd always be working out and stretching a lot. If we were in a parking lot he'd get down and start doing push-ups."

Iggy collaborated closely with the former Pistol Glen Matlock on the *Soldier* album

Iggy received substantial royalties as co-writer of the Bowie hit *China Girl*

KNIVES AND PANTYHOSE

One show that, on paper, looked like a slam dunk of a hometown gig in Detroit, but turned out to be the complete opposite, was when they opened for The Rolling Stones to 72,000 people. "Mick Jagger wouldn't say 'hi' to anyone and Iggy was really pissed off about that," Burke says. "Plus we had no soundcheck. That night, he decided he was just going to wear pantyhose and a motorcycle jacket, so when he walked out on stage he was basically naked from the waist down.

"All hell rained down on us. The lyrics to the song *I Need More* are 'more champagne, more cocaine' but Iggy was on the edge of the stage screaming 'I need more knives, more bottles'. The bass player got a knife thrown that hit his knuckle, bottles were flying past my head. The sound in that place was a bit like stepping into a Roman coliseum. It was harrowing but amazing."

Burke was also involved on the experimental follow-up album *Zombie Birdhouse* and also worked with him on a track for the 1984 film *Repo Man*, but Pop was in need of some time out. "I think he had some kind of breakdown," Burke recalls. "He had been going full blast from the time we first met back in 1977. He was on the brink when we were doing *Zombie Birdhouse*."

ROBERTA BAYLEY/REDFERNS/GETTY CLAYTON CALL/REDFERNS/GETTY

> THE RIDER WAS NO FOOD BACKSTAGE, ONLY BOOZE AND DRUGS. NO BLOW, NO SHOW

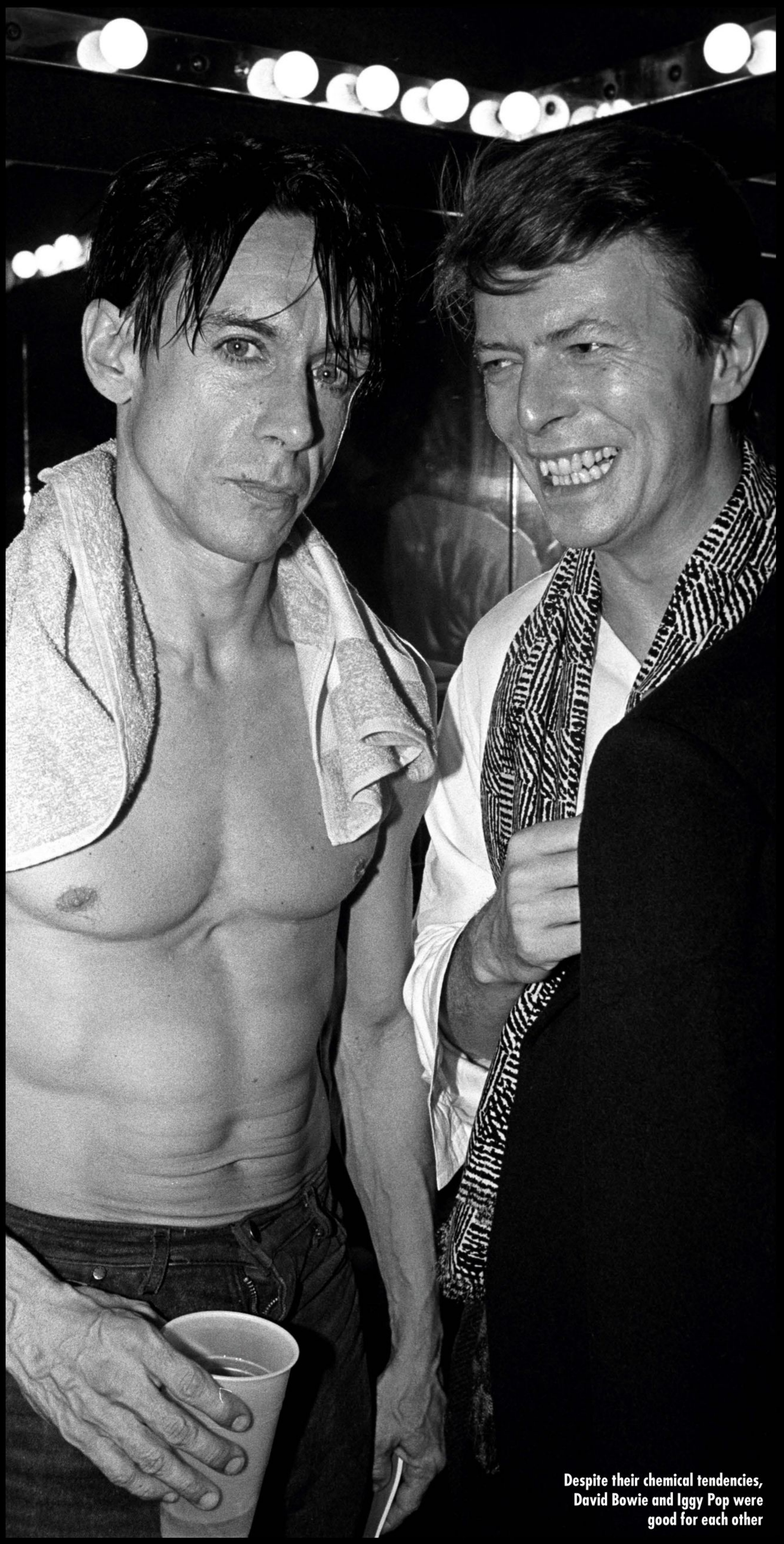
Some time off followed, allowed largely by the huge success of Bowie's *China Girl* in 1983, which the pair co-wrote for *The Idiot* in 1977, so Iggy got substantial royalties.

Kevin Armstrong, Pop's current band leader, was brought in to play on the follow-up, 1986's new wave-influenced *Blah-Blah-Blah*. "He was very straight and very together at this point," he recalls. "He was healthy and positive, pretty much like he is now." David Bowie was involved in the project again. "I think both of them had finished with their degenerate pasts and problematic behaviours."

The album was a slick, polished affair that spawned a hit of the Johnny O'Keefe song *Real Wild Child*. Armstrong recalls it being less a traditional Iggy Pop record, however. "It wasn't a rock 'n' roll record," he says. "It sounded more of a test bed for a future Bowie album. It was clear that David was producing the record and still in a position of authority in that relationship. There was definitely something in the air about him trying to prop Iggy's career up and give it a boost. The whole thing seemed driven by David. It was his direction and conceptually it's his album." To this day, it remains Pop's most commercially successful album, despite his own aversions to it, that he expressed later on.

What then followed was the antithesis of the radio-friendly polished gleam of the Bowie-heavy *Blah-Blah-Blah*, as Pop ended the decade as he began it: by collaborating with a Sex Pistol. This time, he and Steve Jones worked on a record, *Instinct*, of straight-up hard rock bordering on metal that would earn Pop a Grammy nomination.

The album is indicative of Pop's entire 1980s career: scattered with flashes of brilliance and intrigue as frequently as it is misfires and disappointments. Few would have credited Iggy Pop making it out of that decade alive, but at 72 years of age he is now arguably as revered, prominent and relevant as ever. "Him and Keith Richards are like the cockroaches you can't kill," says Burke. "It's great to see him doing so well."



LARRY BUSACCA/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

Despite their chemical tendencies, David Bowie and Iggy Pop were good for each other

Robert Crumb

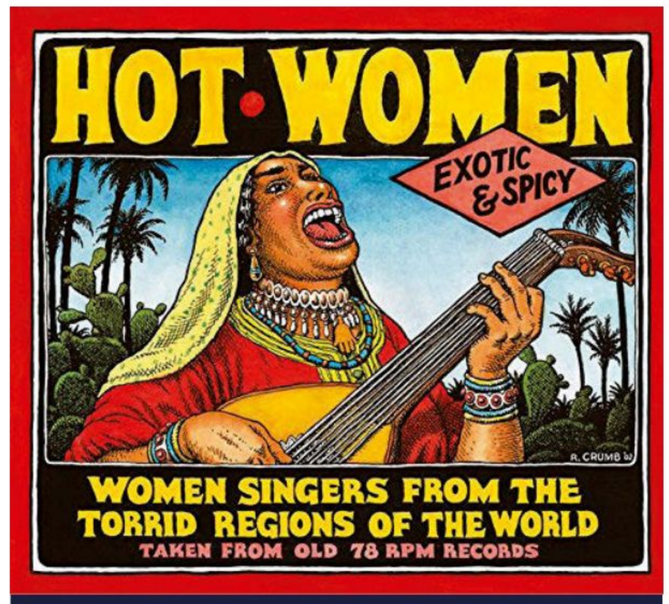
A major figure in the comic book world as flower power blossomed in California, Robert Crumb turned his unique style to nearly 100 album covers – with unique results. **Teri Saccone** meets the *Fritz The Cat* creator

Big Brother & The Holding Company
Cheap Thrills 1968

"By 1968, I was becoming an underground comics hero. I felt like I didn't know how to act as a cult hero. Other comic artists behaved like rock stars. Not me. Anyway, I knew Janis, as at the time I was living nearby in the Haight and Janis used to stop by my house to smoke pot and talk about the comics. She was a real character, smart, but quite nice. So that's why I did the sleeve, not because I was a fan of the music, I'm not. But she was obviously an exceptional singer who sang like Bessie Smith. So I drew a montage which I intended for the back cover. But Janis, or her band, or her label decided to make that the front cover instead. Voila! I became an album artist. I got a flat fee of $600 for that and someone kept the original art. I never saw it again, but heard it sold for a lot of money later. Dunno what happened to the rejected original front cover. Never saw that again either."

Various Artists
The Music Never Stopped 1995

"This cover was commissioned by Richard Nevins of Shanachie Entertainment Corp in exchange for some rare blues and country 78s from his collection. The idea for the cover was entirely Nevins'. He gave me a list of the names of all the performers he wanted portrayed. I personally didn't think it was a great idea — too many people, too crowded an image, but I did it to his specifications. It took a long time to complete. Oh well, I got some good 78s out of it…"



Various Artists
Hot Women: Women Singers From The Torrid Regions Of The World 2003

"This was originally my wife Aline's idea. I put it together in 2003. This project ended up being months of work. I had no idea when I started it that it would take so long. First, there was the work of not just the cover but all the artwork inside: portraits of eight of the women singers, designing the label for the disc itself and then the producers, Kein & Aber, were insistent I write something about each of the performers. I knew little or nothing about most of them, and in 2003 it was difficult to find any information about long-gone women singers in Algeria, Tunisia and Madagascar. The pay for all this work was modest, it was not a big seller. I decided it wasn't worth doing my own compilations after that."

A maverick illustrator, Robert Crumb's work is subversive, ingeniously crafted and uniquely identifiable. The most influential and arguably controversial comic book artist of his generation, he helped define popular culture during the late 60s and 70s. Founder of the underground Zap Comics, Crumb's popularity sprang not only from his eye-catching visuals but also the cartoon narratives, rife with scathing wit, political and social satire, and an underlying darkness. Besides his innumerable contributions to comics, Crumb has worked on nearly 100 album sleeves.

Born in Philadelphia in 1943, Robert Crumb has been depicted consistently as an eccentric oddball, whose never dull designs courted controversy and divided opinion. Yet his ubiquitous motif, Keep On Truckin' went mainstream, as did his celebrated comics *Fritz The Cat* and *Mr. Natural*.

Crumb's career coincided with the blossoming of flower power, and he lived in San Francisco at the height of hippie-dom. "The first time I took LSD it completely knocked me for a loop," he recalls. "Things were never the same. Reality seemed like a shabby cardboard farce compared to the levels of meaning that I experienced under the influence of that drug."

UNLIKELY FIGUREHEAD

In San Francisco, Crumb became an unlikely figurehead of the counter-culture movement, yet he also remained true to his artistic values.

"The first time I ever took LSD it completely knocked me for a loop"

Robert Crumb first designed a record cover when Janis Joplin asked him to provide a sleeve for her album *Cheap Thrills*

An accomplished musician (banjo, mandolin and songwriting) who played with The Cheap Suit Serenaders, Crumb's also an obsessive 78 collector and his passion for shellac is rabid.

Speaking from his home in Southern France, where he's lived for decades, he kicks off the interview by declaring: "For me, it's not 'Long Live Vinyl', it's 'Long Live Shellac'. I seriously collect 78rpm records, mostly from the shellac era. I don't even like vinyl.

"The LP is a pain in the ass. The only good thing about it is the cover, an opportunity for graphics and plenty of room for notes on the back. But if you want to listen to just one track, say, in the middle of the record, you have to tediously try to get the needle down in the thin space between the tracks.

"I prefer having to get up and change the record after every three-minute single side. This forces one to stay engaged with the music, which is, after all, not live music. Plus, I like having to decide after every side what to listen to next. This keeps you actively engaged and sharpens your powers of discrimination."

> **"For me it's not 'Long Live Vinyl', it's 'Long Live Shellac'!"**

COCKAMAMIE CELEBRITYHOOD

We quickly change topics to visual art. Does it somehow help to be an outlier to make art that resonates with the mainstream? "Me, mainstream?" Crumb laughs. "It may surprise you to learn that all my books, except for *Book Of Genesis Illustrated*, only really sell in relatively small numbers to a scattering of people in various countries.

"Despite my cockamamie celebrityhood, my work is not widely read, except, again, for *Genesis*, which sold in far, far bigger numbers than anything else. OK, people in general know Keep on Truckin', maybe the *Fritz The Cat* movie. But mostly, it's *Fritz The Cat*, and the making of that film I had nothing to do with. That's about it.

"I don't believe one necessarily has to be an outsider to produce meaningful art. But it helps because outsiders have a lot of time on their hands. As a social outcast, you're more likely to develop an original state of mind and find your own creative path. Often some form of artistic expression is the only way you can find to connect with your fellow humans. That was certainly the case with me. I had nothing else going for me in my youth. Nothing!"

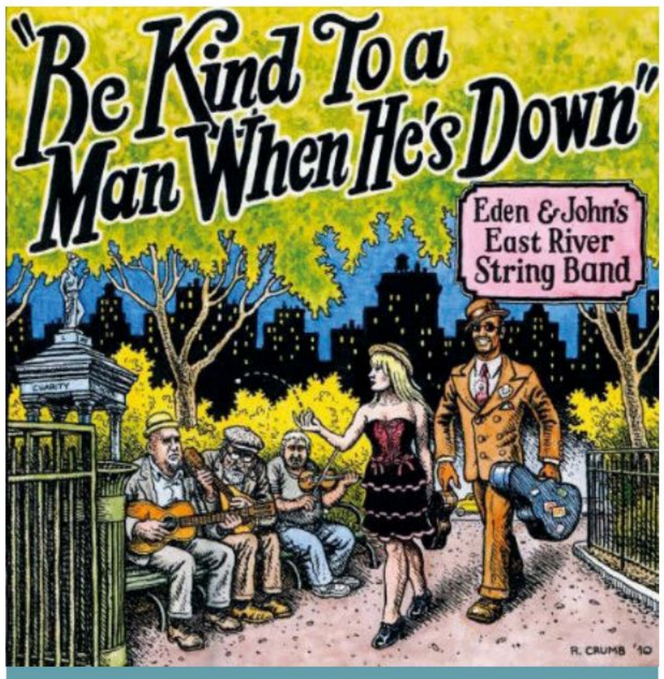
Despite his protestations, Crumb is a superstar in the comic and art world. He's turned down many lucrative deals to commercialise his art, focusing today primarily on private commissions. Art still remains a fulfilling pursuit – he's remained relevant and venerated for half a century despite his provocative oeuvre.

"Yeah, of course," he says. "I'm glad that my work has remained relevant and that people continue to admire what I've done. But at the same time, there have always been detractors. Those who find my comics too negative, disgusting even, or misogynistic, racist.

"Most women don't really like my work. My fans are mostly men, 98 per cent. Most women, if they know my work at all, don't like it. My art definitely has no seductive charm for most women. Plus, nowadays there's a large contingent among young comics artists and fans who hate my work and accuse me of sexism and racism."

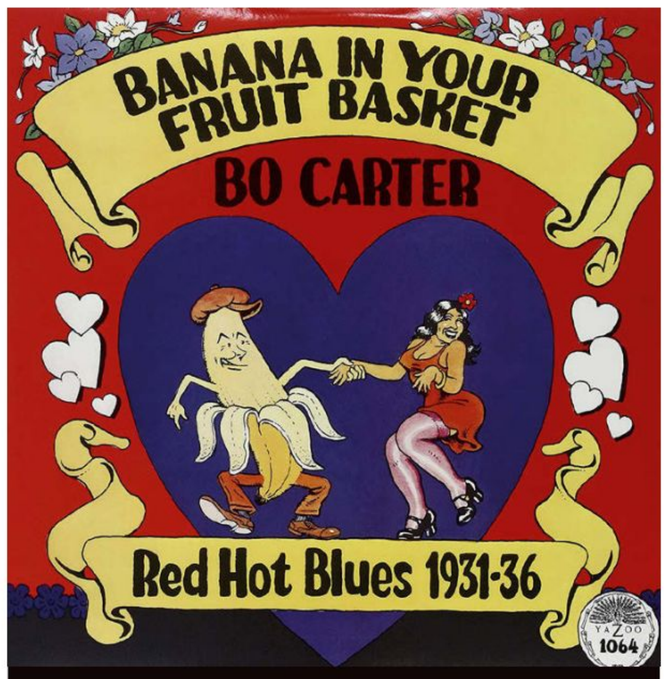
Racism is a criticism that has haunted Crumb over the years, although regular readers of his work point out that he has systematically satirised and criticised racism in the USA. He has an abiding love of black blues musicians and has worked with numerous African American artists on their covers. Crumb is neither defiant nor apologetic when we put the subject to him.

"My work does elicit strong reactions. It's not for everybody. I knew that when I was drawing it. I was never, ever going for a mass audience. I just hoped that some people would find it entertaining so that I wouldn't have to go back to the greeting card company in



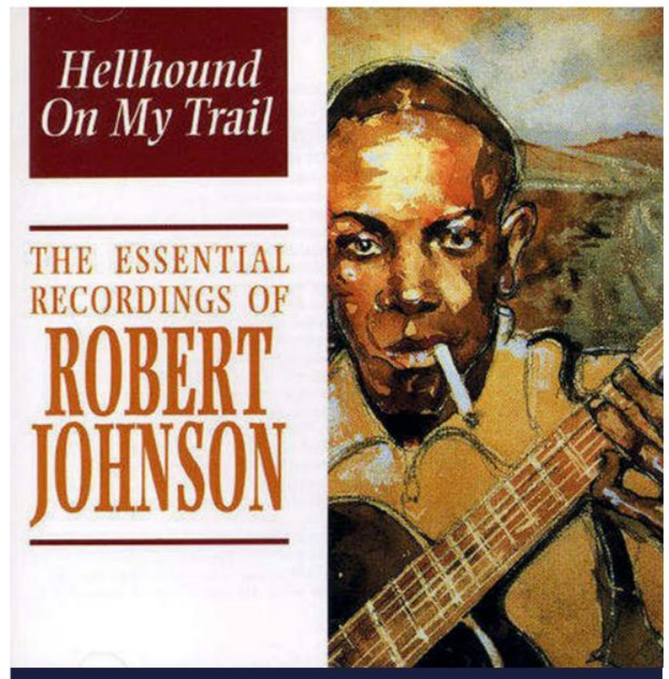
Eden & John's East River String Band
Be Kind To A Man When He's Down 2011

"I am actually a member of the band on this record. John and Eden are good friends of ours — me, my wife Aline, and my daughter Sophie. We met them through Sophie when she lived in New York in 2005-2007. She met Eden at 'C Squat' in the East Village. John and I hit it off through our mutual passion for collecting 78s and playing old music. John gave me good 78s as payment for doing the cover art for several of the albums of their band. I play on some tunes on these albums. As Eden is really the star of this band, the covers always centre around some jokey idea featuring her as the centre of attraction."



Bo Carter
Banana In Your Fruit Basket 1979

"This cover was made some time in the 1970s for a small blues reissue label in New York called Yazoo, owned by a young blues enthusiast, Nick Perls. I received old blues 78s in exchange for the artwork. The design for the lettering, banners and border motifs on this cover was stolen directly from an old can of Lovers' Secrets incense powder, made by the King Novelty Co. of Chicago back in the golden age of commercial graphics, the 1920s, 30s and 40s, a period when everything from matchbook covers to locomotives and skyscrapers were designed in a way pleasing to the eye. 'Steal from the best', I always say."



Robert Johnson
Hellhound On My Trail 1995

"This was a big headache. I drew this cover art from a photo of Johnson. The guy who claims rights to much of Johnson's work threatened to sue me for copying the image. He's extremely litigious. I got a summons to appear in court. Oh, God, it was awful. I said, 'You can't claim ownership of my drawing'. I was told that I'd probably win in court. But fighting that would have cost me around $100,000, so instead I agreed to settle out of court."

Cleveland (his first job was illustrating cards for American Greetings). Being able to earn a living on my own terms was crucial to me. I haven't had a boss since 1966, when I was 23.

"Yet I did well, provided for a family. I've been economically successful. I'm not filthy rich and never aspired to be. I'm actually inept at business. Yet I ended up prospering from this work that I did – work that was not even trying to cater to mass tastes. I was just doing my own thing, going my own way in my work, and enough people liked it that I could live from it! How rare is that?"

Crumb has illustrated myriad album sleeves despite a complete disregard for modern music. He has even published a book that includes all his sleeves, *The Complete Record Cover Collection*. What does he derive from this type of work?

"I enjoy doing album covers and posters that incorporate lettering with visual images," he says. "I studied old magazine covers, advertisements, movie posters, outdoor signage, all from the 'golden age' of commercial art, say 1875 to 1950. I borrow from these old sources, I steal from the best. I love old lettering design, always have. Lettering is a lost art these days."

ENLIGHTENED TIMES

Crumb remains brutally honest, sometimes to his own detriment. "Perhaps my biggest mistake was that I revealed too much. I didn't keep enough to myself," he confides. "It's a sickness to be so open."

We now live in enlightened times compared to when Crumb fetishised the female form and rendered sexually explicit cartoons.

His perspective on this has always been from an intellectualised vantage point. "All I'll say is, I think we are still enormously ignorant about sex and gender differences, as we are about many things. We understand very little about the microbiome, or about weather patterns, even consciousness itself is a mystery.

"Five hundred years from now, if we're still here on this planet, humans will look back on this time in horror, just as we look back on the year 1519, the year Cortez landed on the beaches in Mexico. Then again, the 1500s was the time of Leonardo da Vinci and Pieter Bruegel The Elder. And no one has ever surpassed those guys in the visual arts, in my opinion."

Despite any preconceptions, his intellect, generosity and unguardedness continue to register Robert Crumb as a loveable and fascinating soul. By now, he is unnerved by the interrogation and clearly has work to do. But first things first: "I must now go and listen to some old 78s to calm my nerves." ●

There's all sorts of Robert Crumb merchandise available at www.crumbproducts.com

TALKING SHOP

David's Music

LETCHWORTH

David's Music is a thriving Hertfordshire record shop that attracts repeat visits not only from record collectors but also bands. **Christopher Barrett** looks at what's in store

The UK's earliest garden city, Letchworth is home to the UK's first roundabout, but more importantly for those interested in smaller and more rewarding circular objects, it's also the home of one of the UK's best-loved independent record stores.

Opened in 1963, David's has expanded over the years and now consists of three linked shops, encompassing a bookshop, record store and cafe. With its yellow signature branding on green background, David's is a timeless presence on Letchworth's Eastcheap.

"Some people will spend most of the day here, moving between the shops and cafe. David's has become a hub for the community, there are lots of clubs and organisations that are run out of here because it is in the centre of town and lends itself well to a community spirit," says the store's assistant manager Ashlie Sky.

It is nearly 10 years since Ashlie joined David's Music, straight from university. "It was supposed to be a short-term thing while I worked out what to do with my life, but I had always wanted to work in a record shop and soon found myself getting swept along by the success of Record Store Day. Shortly after that, I was elected onto the Entertainment Retailers Association board and became more involved that way," she says.

The 800-square-foot record shop has more than 5,000 records on sale, with a fairly even split of new and second-hand vinyl. Ashlie can still recall the buzz she felt while taking payment for the most expensive album she has sold at David's; a first pressing of Led Zeppelin's eponymous debut with turquoise lettering on the cover. It went for £1,000. She works alongside manager Andy Oaten, who has been with the shop since 1984.

Andy says David's has sold many records for between £100 and £800, including a first pressing of The Who's *Live At Leeds* with all inserts, *The Who Sell Out* first press with poster, Hendrix's *Are You Experienced?* and *Electric Ladyland* first pressings.

"Some LPs from more recent times can also fetch a good price," he says. "We recently sold a copy of Prince's *The Black Album* for £250 and some Queen and Pink Floyd albums from the late 1980s and early 1990s that went for big money."

Sky says David's used to sell second-hand vinyl on eBay and Discogs, but they decided to call a stop to it because it was negatively impacting the shop. "Most of the really good stuff was going abroad, which is fine, but it seemed a shame to not be able to offer the best records to people that make the effort to come into the shop," she says.

David's may stock a good number of highly sought-after records, but Sky says the staff make sure the atmosphere in the shop is always welcoming and unpretentious.

"We don't have that cool, aloof, record shop vibe, there is none of that here. Our customer base is pretty broad, we cater to a lot of people, and we are seeing an increasing number of females coming in. So, we make sure the atmosphere here is as inclusive as possible and people don't feel stupid asking for something by Barbra Streisand," she says.

With the aim of accommodating all budgets, David's stocks a wide array of vinyl

David's Books
Music Books
Coffee, Tea & Cake
David's
RECORD STORE DAY UK
21.04.2018
BBC MUSIC

Fehérlófia Fenella
Rachael Dadd
Live in-store at David's Music
Wednesday 13th November at 7pm
New LPs

BETTER OBLIVION COMMUNITY CENTER

albums for £3, and has an ongoing '4 for £10' offer. "We sell a huge amount of those," says Ashlie. "It is appealing to teenagers, or someone new to vinyl, who doesn't want to invest a lot of money in it yet."

When it comes to acquiring used vinyl, Ashlie says it's not necessary to go out looking for it. "We benefit from good word-of-mouth recommendations. We have people travel long distances to bring stuff in to us because we have a good reputation for offering fair prices. Occasionally, if it is a big collection, we will go to them, we have a dedicated van that goes out and picks up extensive collections. "We have thousands of lines. We do a lot of rock and pop but also a selection of world music, hip hop, jazz, blues, soundtracks – all tastes are catered for, but rock and pop dominates the space."

Since Ashlie first joined David's Music, she has seen the revival of interest in vinyl first-hand and has worked to increase the shop's range of new releases. "We have always had new and second-hand vinyl, but when I started the new vinyl was a much smaller section – 10 years ago, it was not looking good for record stores," she says.

Ashlie was integral in the shop's involvement in Record Store Day in 2009, but it wasn't until the following year that David's went beyond simply selling the limited-edition releases.

"In 2010, we realised we could really make something of it and have a party in the shop. We stocked a lot more titles, had T-shirts and stickers, bands performing all afternoon and then DJs. It felt like a turning point, from then on we started stocking a lot more new-release vinyl," she says.

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

While David's no longer sells second-hand vinyl online, it does sell a small number of new releases via its website. It is one of a group of 24 indie record shops around the UK that exclusively sell releases from Dinked Editions, the collective launched in 2018 by Drift in

Totnes, Piccadilly in Manchester, Resident in Brighton and Transmission in Margate.

It started with Kurt Vile's *Bottle It In*, and now some 35 Dinked Editions are available, including sumptuous versions of Cate Le Bon's *Reward* and Portico Quartet's *Memory Streams*. Says Ashlie: "There is a lot of interest in them, some of our customers have collected all of the Dinked releases.

"It is really nice being part of a little collective of great shops, it feels like a community and we all help each other out."

David's also sells copies of new albums that have been signed by visiting artists. Both Ashlie and Andy have found it relatively easy to persuade some of their favourite acts to perform in store.

"We have loads of in-stores. We try and chase bands we really enjoy, so for me getting Wolf People, who are signed to Jagjaguwar, to play in the shop was a huge treat. It was like having one of my favourite bands play in my living room," she says.

For Andy, a fan of The Divine Comedy, getting Neil Hannon to play in the shop on two occasions was huge, while both of them were elated to see 10cc's Graham Gouldman play a set there.

> **People are increasingly realising what an amazing resource a record shop is**

"We are big 10cc fans and so we emailed him, he emailed back, came in and played. It was all so easy, he was so approachable and unpretentious. It's great that people want to come here and play. I think it helps being midway between London and Cambridge, and the fact we have been around a long time," says Ashlie.

PILGRIMAGE TRAIL

Brothers David and William Armitage launched David's Bookshop in March 1963 and began selling new and second-hand records from the store shortly afterwards. The music department proved so successful that by the early 1980s it warranted its own shop.

"David's became a destination store, people made a pilgrimage to it because they managed to get quite rare items in — there wasn't much going on in Letchworth in the late 1960s and early 1970s," says Sky.

"Now there are three units all joined together, Music at number 12, books at 14 and a couple of years ago we opened the cafe and knocked them all through, so it is a massive space. It keeps growing, which is amazing," she says.

The Armitage brothers sold David's to its current owner, Paul Wallace, in 2009, but William Armitgage remains involved with the shop as a director and still owns the building.

The bustling cafe, with its wooden floors, walls adorned with metro tiles, shelves of beautifully bound second-hand books and framed newspaper cuttings about the store, is the latest addition to David's and has proven popular with locals and helped to boost the record store's business.

"The cafe has been really beneficial," says Ashlie. "It started out as a small operation at the back of the record shop. We would tailor what we played to the people in the coffee shop and recommend things to them.

People would ask us to play new albums, it won us a lot of sales.

"The cafe is a separate space, it works really well but we do have to be careful, we can't play anything too out-there. It's great to be able to use the cafe to advertise new releases and in-store events. At Christmas, we make hampers that include tea bags, books and records, and sell them in the cafe — the businesses all go together really nicely."

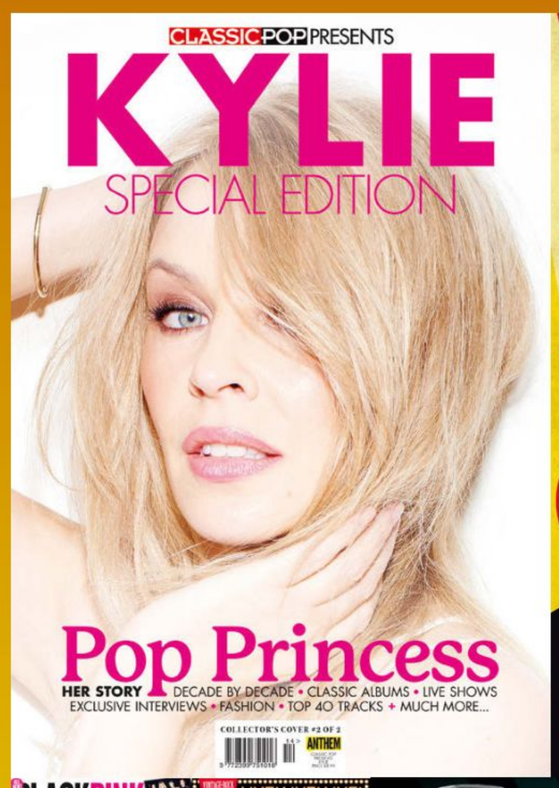
Having ridden the crest of the wave of the vinyl revival for the past decade, Ashlie is not concerned by reports that the format's sales have begun to plateau. She says that many of David's customers are young and enthusiastic about collecting records and consider having a subscription to a streaming service as complementary to their vinyl collection.

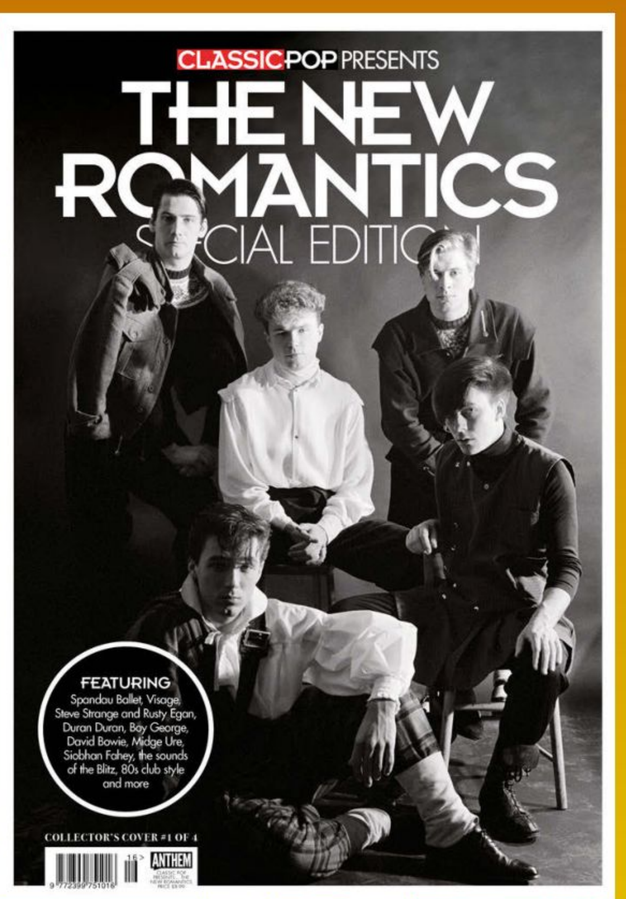
"Something I hear all the time from customers is, 'I've been listening to it on Spotify non-stop and now I really want to own it'. It tends to be younger people with less disposable income. Older people will just buy an album if they like the band, but younger people with less disposable income are having to be more choosey and Spotify gives them the opportunity to try before they buy.

"People used to come into record stores to discover new music and now maybe that's not so much the case. We do take pride in recommending things to people, but Spotify does that very well without you having to leave the house.

"I hope the future is well rounded, there is nothing wrong with Spotify, but I think people are increasingly realising what an amazing resource a record shop is." ●

LOVE MUSIC?





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COUNTER CULTURE

In his first column for *Long Live Vinyl*, Union Music Store's **Del Day** selects some of his shop's most treasured 'gateway' albums

Perusing over the racks, a tad ravaged it's fair to say after a busy Christmas period, I'm keen to make sure that certain touchstone records are in stock and in full view of the customers. These albums – for the purpose of this column I'll call them 'gateway albums' – not only warrant a purchase on their own merit but also provide a stepping stone, a gateway, to sonic gold that you may never have known existed.

These records, like a trip through Professor Digory Kirke's wardrobe, won't take you to a snowbound Narnia, but will set you on your way to your own magical aural wonderland. You just need to find them. From the counter, every time you get close to them I may shout, "Hey, that's a great record" or "Have you heard that, mate?" at the unsuspecting punter as the hairs on the back of my neck begin to twitch as their fingers come close to the prize.

So what are the 'gateway albums'? I guess every shop will have their own, but I'd also wager many of them are pretty similar. Television's *Marquee Moon* is a prime example. You may think you are just buying a late-70s guitar masterpiece: edgy, timeless, ultimately a nu-wave classic and, of course, you are. What you may not realise is that you have also stood on the magic stone, a cavernous hole opens up beneath your feet and a bit like Charlie heading faster and faster into the tunnel at Wonka's factory, for now you can go anywhere.

From Tom Verlaine's intricate fretwork, it's an easy step to Bert Jansch, Jerry Garcia, the more thoughtful Neil Young moments even, but dive a little deeper and all of a sudden your ears are being ignited by Steve Wynn's Dream Syndicate, Chris Forsyth, all those wonderful middle-period Wire records where Bruce Gilbert is in his prime and even becoming acquainted with Peter Laughner's unflinching guitar work with Pere Ubu. You can even discover a great new band like Omni, who encapsulate all of the above. That alone warrants a purchase, surely? Twenty quid and a key to unlimited aural joy? Yes please!

That's without starting down the jazz route, a road well trodden by both Verlaine and Richard Lloyd, who drew most of their influences from the likes of John Coltrane and late-60s Miles Davis.

It's the same with Bowie's *Low*, itself a seminal record but one that will have you heading down the Michael Rother freeway without so much as a flick of that new wedge haircut. By the same measure, a short hop and skip and you could be bathing in the solitude of the likes of Yann Tiersen, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Taylor Deupree, or heading even further east and into the precision tranquillity of Japanese environmental musical soundscapes. All from a moody-looking Bowie album, who would have thought?

What you may not realise is that you have stood on the magic stone...

Likewise, a seemingly innocent mainstay of any decent record shop, Talking Heads' *Fear Of Music* contains more than just a slab of glorious vinyl. Embedded in its grooves is a ticket to ride on a global megabus heading all the way to Fela's Kalakuta Republic via New York's coke-infested club scene. Buy it and you will be crate diggin' early Sons Of Kemet albums before you know it. There are numerous others I could mention, but I'm sure any discerning record store owner will alert you when you have found one.

A year and a half in at Union Music Store and it's clear that our punters have lost none of that exploratory fervour that drew them to the wonder of vinyl in the first place. Many find their own way to new music, genres and old classics they may never have encountered before, but some just need a little prodding.

Gateway albums provide that and are worth their weight in gold to any record store owner who is looking to develop a relationship with their punters with the ultimate goal of promoting each and every one of them to the hallowed standing of a regular. ●

Del Day is the co-owner of Union Music Store in Lewes, Sussex. He has been buying and collecting vinyl since the early 80s

Choice Cuts #34

The Can

MONSTER MOVIE

MUSIC FACTORY

A first issue of Can's experimental debut album is a rare beast

Revolutionary is a word that gets thrown around a lot in music, but there really is no other way to describe Germany's finest psychedelic export, Can. Fusing elements of traditional rock music with avant-garde funk, jazz and way beyond, Can were at the forefront of the krautrock movement.

While the band's roots date back to Cologne in 1966, things started to take shape in 1968 under the name Inner Space, recording a number of songs which initially would be known enigmatically as *Prepared To Meet Thy Pnoom*. These tracks were included on the *Delay 1968* album and were eventually released in 1981. Subsequently, the band changed their name to The Can (then later just Can) and began to focus on their debut album, *Monster Movie*.

The original pressing has a very fragile matt sleeve, featuring an orange circular image in the centre, along with the snappy tagline 'Made in a castle with better equipment'. It was the first of two releases on the Music Factory label and has the catalogue number (SRS 001) hand scratched into the run-out. There is also a transitional pressing in existence that has the Liberty Records matrix from subsequent pressings etched. This is believed to be due to Liberty wanting to rush release the reissue of the album after signing the band, before they fully switched over to the Galactus artwork that is now synonymous with the album.

Given its extreme rarity and historical significance, original copies of the album change hands for around £5,000. This is a true investment piece, which rarely ever shows up for sale on the open market. ●

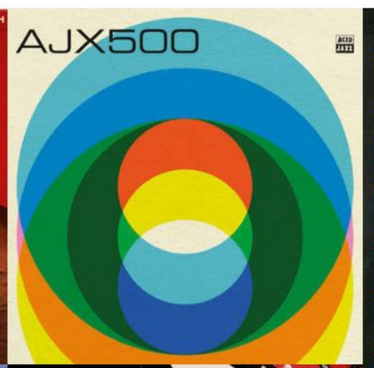
Wax Facts

THE CAN
MONSTER MOVIE
BLACK VINYL
1969

£5,000

Reviews

REISSUES & COMPILATIONS 92
NEW RELEASES 98
BOOKS 105
NEW GEAR 106



Johnny Marr

SINGLE LIFE
WARNER

The Smiths were one of the great UK singles bands – now Johnny Marr rounds up his first 10 solo 45 releases in a 7" box. The synchronicity of which isn't lost on **John Earls**

WHAT'S INSIDE

10x Coloured 7"s

1 The Messenger/ New Town Velocity
2 Upstarts/Psychic Beginner
3 New Town Velocity/The It-Switch
4 Easy Money/ Use Me Up
5 Dynamo/Struck
6 I Feel You/Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want (Live)
7 Candidate/Exit Connection
8 Hi Hello/Jeopardy
9 Spiral Cities/ Spectral Eyes
10 Armatopia/ The Bright Parade

One of the three art prints included in Johnny Marr's solo singles boxset is a close-up of a tattoo on his forearm, proclaiming '45 R.P.M.' in Parlophone's font. Marr had it done 10 years ago, when he was 45, to confirm singles have as much religious significance to him as the Shiva tattooed on his other arm. If anyone has lived their life in singles, it's Johnny Marr.

The Smiths may have been at the vanguard of the 80s golden age of the flipside but, if anything, it's more significant Marr has been able to compile such a gorgeous-looking box of 7" singles from the past decade, too: precious few other artists are keeping the art of the proper 7" alive. In an era when major labels routinely charge an eye-watering £10 or more for one-sided 7" singles of pre-existing album tracks,

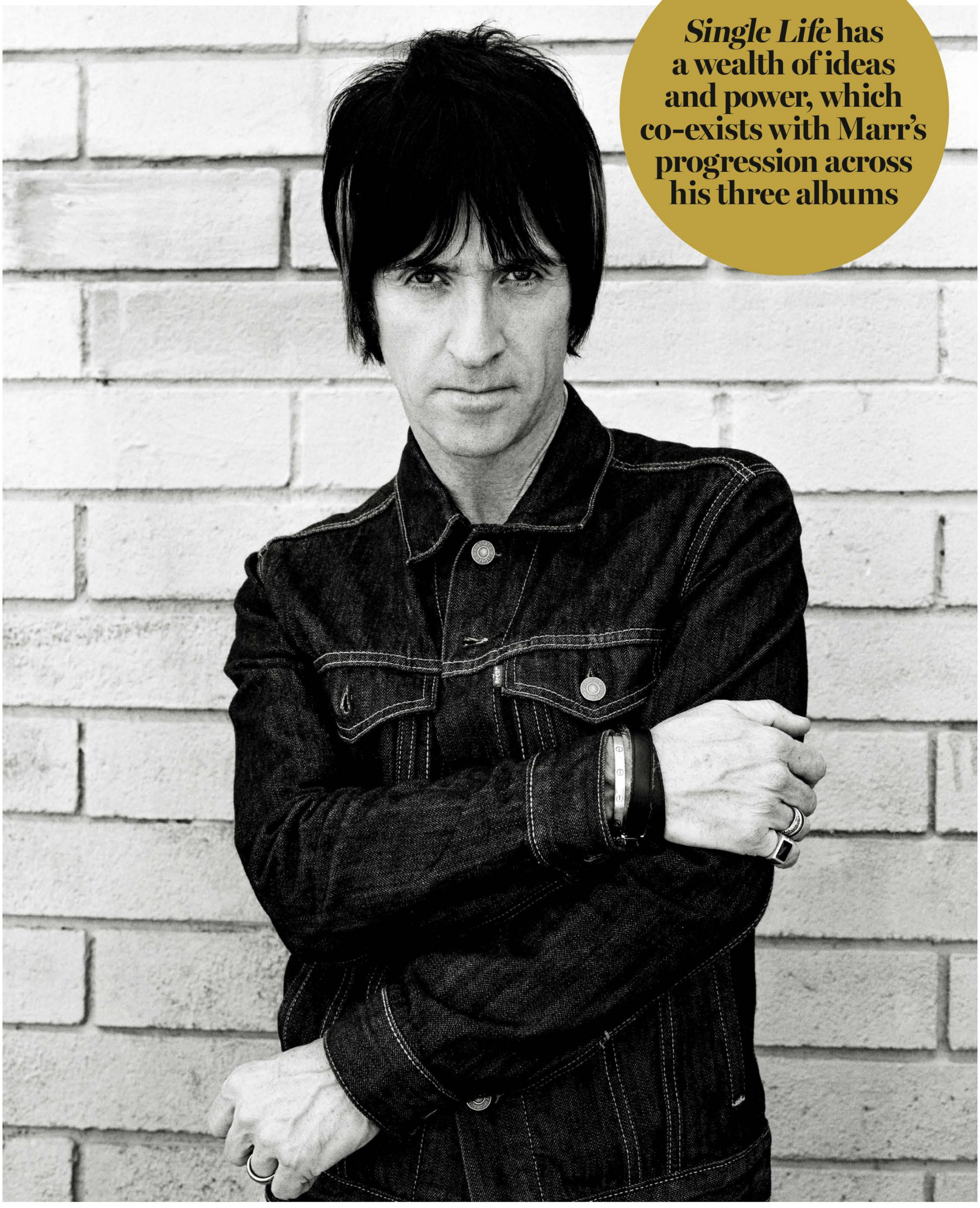
Johnny Marr is stoically reminding people of the importance of B-sides. IDLES, Pet Shop Boys, Arctic Monkeys, Saint Etienne and Manic Street Preachers are among the last bands to still bother. The 90s multi-format era, which meant Suede and Oasis were able to release B-side compilations as good as their parent albums, is as baffling to many new music fans as the existence of the cassingle.

Single Life starts out prosaically enough. Marr's 2012 debut *The Messenger* is released as a physical single for the first time here, meaning its flipside is merely a demo of future single *New Town Velocity*. Since then? *Single Life* has a wealth of ideas and power which co-exists with Marr's progression across his three albums from the "Decent for a solo effort" chiming rock & roll of *The Messenger* to 2018's sprawling, shamanic and psychedelic *Call The Comet*.

The breakneck ride of *Easy Money* was the best single of 2014. Just when the up-for-it *The It-Switch* starts wrapping up as a perfectly excellent pop song, Marr bolts on a magnificent solo, because he's Johnny 'Fucking' Marr and he's entitled to show off, thanks. Jeopardy lies in wait on *Hi Hello*'s B-side, ready to rip the unwary to shreds. *Spectral Eyes* was written for Blondie, before Marr decided it was too good to give to anyone else. He was right to keep it. There's a sumptuous live version of *Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want* for nostalgists, while the divergence into technicolour synth pop on brand new single *Armatopia* suggests album four will be another bright new dawn for someone always out for adventure.

At £95, *Single Life* is steep. £9.50 a single? That's poor. At least the artwork is varied while staying reliably fascinating, from the guitar hero pose on *Dynamo* to the brutalist imagery of *New Town Velocity*. There are 10 different colours on the vinyl. Pricing aside, *Single Life* is an exemplary collection. There are a thousand reasons to celebrate Johnny Marr. The fact he's still pursuing the perfect single package nearly 40 years into his career is very high up the list.

8



***Single Life* has a wealth of ideas and power, which co-exists with Marr's progression across his three albums**

Bruce Springsteen

18 TRACKS/LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY/THE RISING/
DEVILS & DUST/LIVE IN DUBLIN

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

By Bruce's standards, the 1990s were lean, ending with a clear-out, *18 Tracks*, all but three songs drawn from 1998's *Tracks* boxset. Since one was a 1990 version of *The Promise*, a fragile outtake from 1978's *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*, and another the slow-burning *The Fever*, it at least proved a useful reminder of his talent. The new millennium, though, began with the E Street Band's reunion, documented on 2001's raucous *Live In New York City*. *Badlands* and *Jungleland* were especially epic, though the quieter moments were most astonishing: a sitar-focused *Born In The USA*, a gripping, 12-minute *The River*. Post-9/11, his mood changed, with *The Rising* hailed as a triumphant comeback from a hero who could wear the Stars and Stripes without a hint of jingoism. Nodding to his multicultural heroes – Sam Cooke on *Mary's Place*, Curtis Mayfield on *My City Of Ruins* – even its most chest-beating moments, like *Lonesome Day* and *Countin' On A Miracle*, weren't overly bombastic, though the title track was exceptionally stirring. Furthermore, *Worlds Apart* bravely integrated Qawwali voices to encourage global unity, while more of *Paradise*'s reflective qualities might have benefited the world. These, however, dominated the *Nebraska*-like *Devils & Dust*, particularly the morose *Black Cowboys*, the intimate *Matamoros Banks*, and the quietly uplifting *Reno*. By 2007's *Live In Dublin*, which offered folksy covers such as the traditional *Eyes On The Prize*, plus reinterpretations of his own material – including a manic, almost mariachi *Blinded By The Light* – The Boss was back in control. *Wyndham Wallace*

8

The Undertones

WEST BANK SONGS 1978-1983 A BEST OF

BMG

Beloved of John Peel, who inspired their 1978 formation and then helped fund their first single, *Teenage Kicks*, which he soon made his legendary anthem – The Undertones rose from nowhere, or what at least, to its inhabitants, felt at the time like nowhere: Derry, Northern Ireland. Articulating adolescent frustrations with the Buzzcocks' ferocity and the Ramones' unruly, juvenile wit – both are audible in their debut album's *Male Model* – they launched themselves with perfect pop-punk tunes: their evergreen debut single and its follow-up, the urgent *Get Over You*, not to mention their debut album's highlights, including the 105-second anthem for the ages, *Here Comes The Summer* and the breathless warbling of *Jimmy, Jimmy*. Such early triumphs, however, are dotted throughout this celebration, because, as their brief carer continued, the band's energy started to wane. They made it virtually intact to their second album, 1980's *Hypnotised*, whose *My Perfect Cousin* and *There Goes Norman* remain primitively rousing, but the title track's chugging guitars demanded Feargal Sharkey's ear for melody for their appeal. Released in 1981, *Positive Touch* was instead a step towards the negative, with the more overtly political *It's Going To Happen* adding unexpected brass to diminishing commercial success, while *You're Welcome* wasn't especially so. By 1983's soul-inspired but presciently titled *The Sin Of Pride*, maturity was backfiring, and on *Soul 7* and *The Way Girls Talk* Sharkey's quivering voice sometimes sounds curiously like a higher-pitched Bryan Ferry. Regardless, Peel's patronage was absolutely justified: at their best, they were the best. ***Wyndham Wallace***

8

L DOHERTY

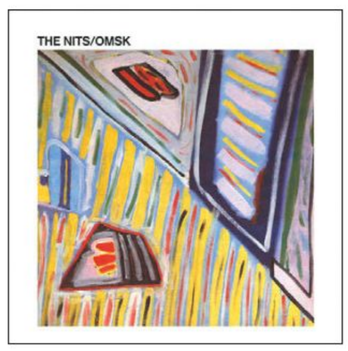
Neneh Cherry
RAW LIKE SUSHI 30TH ANNIVERSARY
UMC

Front-loaded with its biggest singles, *Raw Like Sushi* may now sound a little dated, but Neneh Cherry's debut adopted what was a refreshing, bold approach. Furthermore, its politics – social and sexual – were far-sighted, and Cherry could be witty, too. Bomb The Bass' Tim Simenon lassoed Malcom McLaren's *Buffalo Gals* and Rock Steady Crew's *Hey You* to turn *Buffalo Stance* into a club anthem – among two discs of bonus tracks, Arthur Baker's Nearly Neue mix plays her charisma for all its worth – and Nellee Hooper helped Robert Del Naja predict Massive Attack's *Blue Lines* on *Manchild*. *Kisses On The Wind*, meanwhile, exercised a Cuban influence that drew Madonna comparisons. Next to these, *Phoney Ladies* sounded a little muted and *Outré Risqué Locomotive* didn't quite fulfil its promising, Prince-like title, but even weaker tunes oozed attitude. ***Ben Wardle*** **8**

Various Artists
AMÉRICA INVERTIDA
VAMPISOUL

Following the end of the dictatorship in Uruguay in the mid-80s, a local scene in the country's capital of Montevideo seemed to grow in confidence, emboldened by the arrival of the synthesiser but also showing an urge to push musical boundaries. Singer-songwriters and protest singers, the latter of which had been keeping low, united with jazz musicians and practitioners of the local Afro-Latin rhythm, candombe, to create ethereal, rhythmic fusions of the acoustic and electronic. Stark and moody, the music lies somewhere between the opaque beauty of early 4AD and the liquid jazz-funk fashioned by Bill Laswell. Best are those that unite these frosty percussive soundscapes with the female voice, tracks by Mariana Ingold, Estela Magnone and Travesía finding a breathless balance between light and dark. *Russ Slater* **8**

The Nits
OMSK
MUSIC ON VINYL



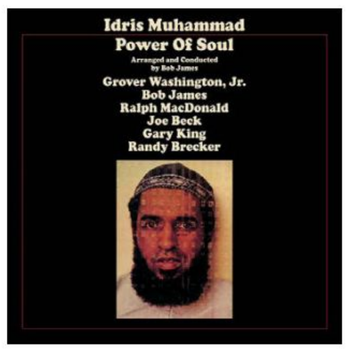
Dutch four-piece The Nits may not mean much to UK listeners, but to European alt-pop fans in the know they're Crowded House meets XTC. *Omsk* (1983) is their fifth album, contains their biggest hit *Nescio* and is a really good place to start investigating their 20+ albums. The Nits' main man Henk Hofstede's lyrics (mainly written in English) cover all manner of unusual subject matter (for example, *Nescio* is about the famous Dutch author of that name; while the album opener is *A Touch Of Henry Moore*), but his voice and guitar – along with Rob Kloet's drums and Robert Jan Stips' keyboards ensure the tunes and arrangements remain melodic and never anything less than dynamic. Occasionally, some songs get stuck inside an 80s synth-bubble, but spend some time with this and you'll end up finding Nits as catchy as their name. Ben Wardle **8**

Robert Plant
DIGGING DEEP
ESPARANZA

Sharing its name with the Led Zep legend's popular podcast, this eight-disc collection of 45s features two songs from each of his solo albums released between 1982 and 2005. While they are all reflective of the time they were recorded, it's interesting how, together, they don't actually sound as disjointed as you might imagine. The taught 80s sheen of *Burning Down One Side* and *Like I've Never Been Gone* sit as comfortably next to *Calling To You* and *29 Palms*, from 1993's *Fate Of Nations*, as they do *Big Log* and *In The Mood* from 1983's *The Principle Of Moments* or *Shine It All Around* and *Tin Pan Valley* from *Mighty ReArranger* (2005). Despite being able to enjoy the luxury of developing "multiple identities over a number of records", there's no doubting that it is Plant's timeless delivery that holds everything together. *Dan Biggane* **8**

Idris Muhammad
POWER OF SOUL
SONY/MUSIC ON VINYL

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE



Released in 1974, jazz drummer Idris Muhammad's third album is a flawless four-track, jazz-funk classic. Born Leo Morris in New Orleans and playing on Fats Domino's *Blueberry Hill* when he was still a teenager, he changed his name when he converted to Islam in the 1960s. By then, he was a key session player on albums by Lou Donaldson, Grant Green and Pharoah Sanders. He's in good company here, utilising Randy Brecker on trumpet, Grover Washington Jnr. on saxophone and Joe Beck's flawless guitar chops. Stand-out track *Loran's Dance* kicks off with the unmistakable Fender Rhodes tinkling of Bob James and will be familiar to Beastie Boys fans as the slow fade to *Paul's Boutique* opener *To All The Girls*. Muhammad's effortless funk drumming would be showcased better on 1976 follow-up *House Of The Rising Sun,* but this is a collective triumph. ***Ben Wardle*** **9**

De La Soul
THE GRIND DATE
BMG

If this re-release had come out last year, it would have marked the 15th anniversary of the Amityville trio's seventh album. By 2004, their label Tommy Boy had been absorbed into WEA, so the band left, ditched the idea of completing their planned trilogy of Art Official Intelligence albums and released this. Despite good reviews, it failed to emulate the success of their previous records, possibly because Black Entertainment Television declined to show the video to lead single *Shopping Bags (She Got From You)*, claiming the act were no longer relevant to its audience. It's a tighter, less skittish record than the two previous AOI albums and packed full of lovingly curated guest spots (watch out for Ghostface Killah, Madlib, Common, Flava Flav and Spike Lee), plus samples from Yes' *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. *Ben Wardle* **8**

Happy Mondays

SQUIRREL AND G-MAN TWENTY FOUR HOUR PARTY PEOPLE PLASTIC FACE CARNT SMILE (WHITE OUT)/BUMMED/ PILLS 'N' THRILLS AND BELLYACHES/YES PLEASE!

LONDON RECORDS

Shaun Ryder is nobody's fool. He spent a large part of his imperial years pretending to be an oaf. Unlike many other drug casualties of the punk wars and ecstasy years, he's matured into a sanguine and avuncular figure. But has the music survived quite so intact? Most people's entry point to the band came with *Kinky Afro* and *Step On*, both of which appear on their best-selling *Pills 'n' Thrills And Bellyaches*. It's still the most reliably 'pop' of the band's four key LPs, with pristine Paul Oakenfold/ Steve Osborne production, hummable tunes and laugh-out-loud lyrics. Predecessor *Bummed* hasn't fared so well. Ryder's voice and words are muffled and indistinct, the band masked in reverb. Debut *Squirrel And G-Man...* is altogether funkier, with Ryder's vocals right up-front and the rhythm section muscular and aggressive. Album opener *Kuff Dam* is one of their finest moments. By the time 1992's *Yes Please!* was made, the drugs were not working. Oakenfold was already booked, so Talking Heads duo Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth took over. They were clearly the only ones working in Barbados while Ryder and Bez squandered Factory Records' remaining cash on crack. 21st century Ryder would scoff at this behaviour, but *Stinkin Thinkin* still hits the spot. ***Ben Wardle***

8

Electronic

ELECTRONIC

RHINO

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

Previously released on heavyweight vinyl in 2015, Rhino's new pressing is oddly timed: *Electronic* turns 30 next year. It also downgrades the album to regular vinyl, though at £17 it's at least much cheaper, too – including for a limited white vinyl pressing. The other difference is, for some reason, substituting the sleeve's original orange landscape for the black one first introduced in 1994. Packaging details aside, *Electronic* is as magnificent now as it was in 2015 and 1991. Freed from The Smiths, Johnny Marr wanted to explore other worlds, Bernard Sumner famously having to persuade his new colleague to play more guitar. When Marr does, even by his standards, the results are extraordinary. The 90s never produced a better pop song than *Get The Message*. Debut standalone single *Getting Away With It* is still sadly absent, but Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant is back on the equally defiant *The Patience Of A Saint*. Sumner brought that album's huge primary-colour production, with Marr adding the melancholy. *Some Distant Memory* starts as euphoric Chicago house, before ending on devastating minor-key keyboards. It's a journey many songs take. Sure, Sumner's rapping has dated, but that misses the point: rather than messing about, *Electronic* is two hugely talented friends figuring out how to be brilliant all over again. At nearly every turn, they succeeded. ***John Earls***

9

KEVIN CUMMINS

Marcos Valle & Azymuth
FLY CRUZEIRO
TIDAL WAVES MUSIC

In 1972, Azymuth's members joined Marcos Valle for the soundtrack to a documentary about Formula One ace and fellow Brazilian *O Fabuloso Fittipaldi*, from which one track gave their band their name. A year earlier, however, the legendary songwriter/producer had hired them to record this rare promotional disc for a national airline. Lacking their subsequent grooves – *Zanzibar* and *Asa Branca* have their moments, but for those, try Light In The Attic's recent Valle reissues – it's nonetheless an intriguing curio, its cocktail sounds perfect for Barrymore collars over lapels by moonlight. *Não Tem Solução – Marina – Rosas* features fine piano work, *Zazueira – Mas Que Nada* nifty keyboard flourishes, *País Do Futebol* a sweet flute air, while the standard, *Prenda Minha*, hands its melody to a muted trumpet. It's easy listening for sophisticated travellers. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **7**

Various Artists
AJX500
ACID JAZZ

Despite containing funk, disco, ska, Afrobeat, progressive rock and psychedelic pop, this 10-track compilation is actually a pretty seamless listen from beginning to end. Perhaps because of being named after a transient musical genre, Eddie Piller's now 33-year-old label has never seemed dated. Far from sounding like a tired nod back to the 90s, Brand New Heavies' *The Funk Is Back* remix could be a fresh track played by Craig Charles on 6 Music or a late-70s, Keb Darge crate-dig discovery. With some previously unreleased vintage tracks, such as Graham Dee's utterly superb bossa nova *Sampaguita* or the Benin funk of Orchestre Picoby Band D'Abomey, a new remix from underrated pop geniuses Corduroy and an exclusive track from Matt Berry, this is a near-essential collection. *Ben Wardle* **8**

SOUNDTRACKS

Thomas Newman
1917
MUSIC ON VINYL

American OST maestro Thomas Newman's score for Sam Mendes' acclaimed *1917* was nominated for a Golden Globe and a BAFTA this year, and has already won a raft of industry awards. As you would expect, this thunderous score is every bit as sweeping and visceral as the acclaimed World War One epic it helps bring to life. The mud and blood-splattered epic was created and edited as an uninterrupted single-shot, a technique that takes you out of your cinema seat and dumps you in the trenches with the characters and hellish chaos that surrounds them. With its low-frequency rumbles, and jolting percussion knocks, Newman's soundtrack plays a huge role in enhancing this experience. War is hell, but Newman's latest soundtrack is anything but. *Gary Tipp* **7**

Various Artists
KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE/
PORCO ROSSO
TURNTABLE LAB

You might expect composers to phone in their work when writing soundtracks for children's animated movies, but not the great Joe Hisaishi. Working closely with world-renowned director, Hayao Miyazaki, Hisaiahi has written moving scores that reflect far deeper themes than you would anticipate finding in films about a teenage witch and a Mediterranean pig pilot. Both films explore the perils of war, unrequited love and finding one's place in the world, and are accompanied by soulful string sections and jazzy brass undertones. These soundtracks should take pride of place in any cinephile's collection. *Tilda Howard* **8**

Various Artists
THE VIRTUES
INVADA

Featuring a remarkably vulnerable central performance from thespian du jour Stephen Graham, Shane Meadows' *The Virtues* (aired to acclaim in May last year on Channel 4) was an ultra-harrowing, yet life-affirming must-watch. The double-vinyl soundtrack from Invada, featuring half a dozen original pieces from PJ Harvey, as well as tracks from the likes of Aphex Twin, Gazelle Twin, Mono and Micah P. Hinson, is less essential, but still amounts to a very nice to have collection. Polly's pieces are stripped back and evocative of the on-screen tension. Along with her score for the stage play *All About Eve*, it would seem that Harvey has a natural flair for soundtrack work. Great things are to be expected. ***Gary Tipp*** **8**

Hildur Gudnadóttir
CHERNOBYL
DECCA

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

You'd be pretty hard-pressed to find a tenser TV viewing experience than that of HBO's *Chernobyl*. The show was, understandably, as bleak as it was atmospheric, accommodated by an Emmy-nominated score from Icelandic composer Hildur Gudnadóttir. Utilising captured field recordings from a decommissioned power plant in Lithuania, her soundtrack drips with thrumming mechanical death rattles, and unsettling hisses and groans. If one piece were to set the tone of the entire show, though, it'd be the track *Vichnaya Pamyat* (*Memory Eternal*). The eerie inclusion of the Homin Lviv Municipal Choir brings the sombre score swelling to a harrowing, near-biblical conclusion. *Tilda Howard* **9**

Tame Impala

THE SLOW RUSH
FICTION

Studio wizard Kevin Parker's latest opus delivers his signature spaced-out sound across a dozen tracks of carefree, blistering pop music. **John Earls** takes delight in his mastery

TRACKLIST

1 One More Year
2 Instant Destiny
3 Borderline
4 Posthumous Forgiveness
5 Breathe Deeper
6 Tomorrow's Dust
7 On Track
8 Lost In Yesterday
9 Is It True
10 It Might Be Time
11 Glimmer
12 One More Hour

First, the bad news. Kevin Parker hasn't made the same sonic leap forward that he did between *Innerspeaker* and *Lonerism*, and then from *Lonerism* to *Currents*. That would have been pretty much impossible, given that *Currents* was one of the defining classic genre-mashing albums of the past decade, and it turns out Parker is but a mere mortal – a theme that recurs throughout *The Slow Rush*. The good news is, like *Currents*, Tame Impala's first LP with a multi-word title is another fantastic album that, if you had to categorise it, is pop music at its core.

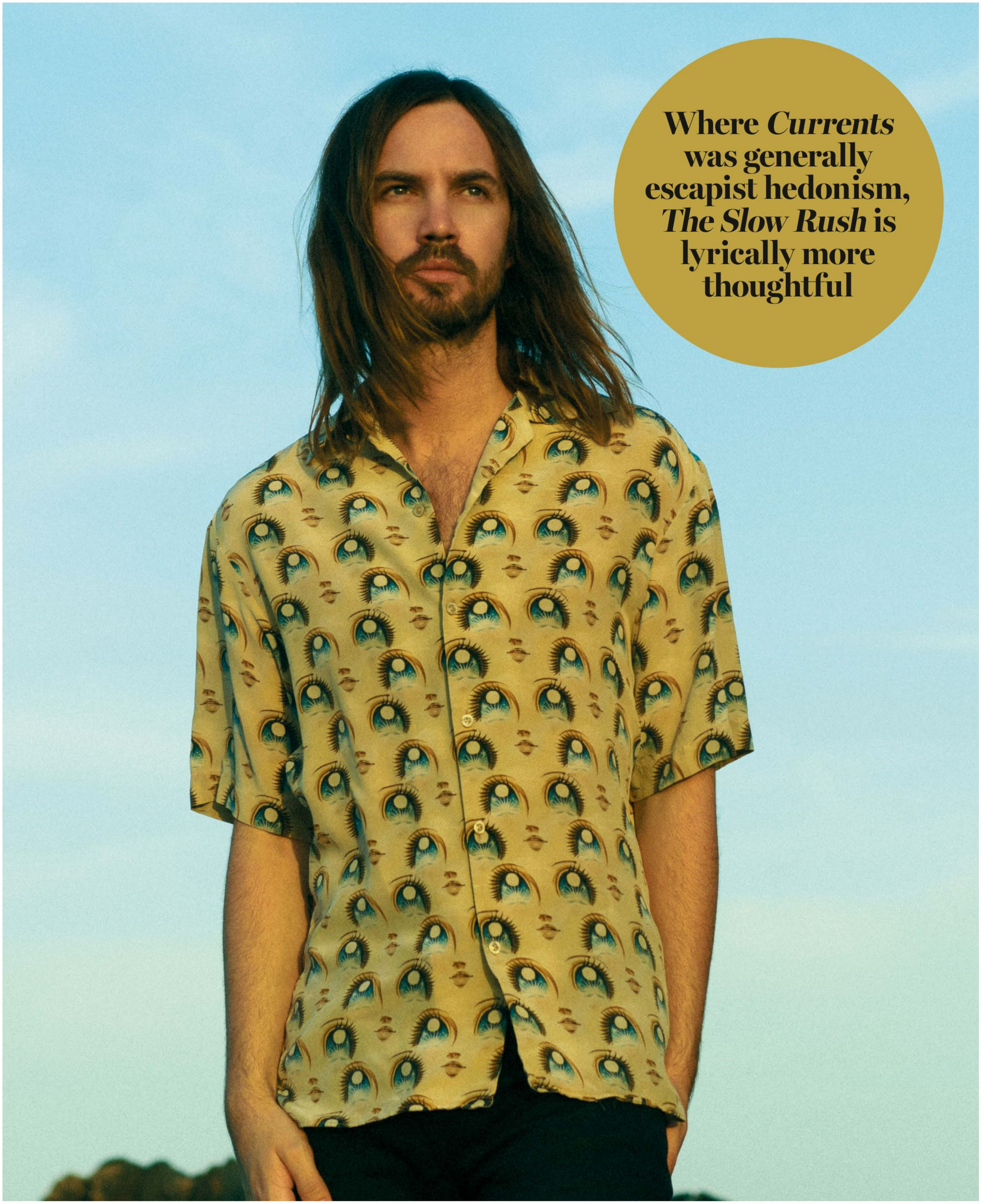
It's been five years since *Currents*, but thankfully *The Slow Rush* doesn't feel like an album that's been overthought. That's not to overlook the complexities in Parker's production – it's a marvel that only one person created the mixture of whomping bass and delicate keys in *Is It True*, the anthem that most obviously plays out Parker's Daft Punk fantasies. But, mostly, these 12 songs sound like carefree, blistering pop music. Many other musicians claim they love a bit of everything, but few other than Parker are as adept at blending every modern technique and veteran craftsmanship into something as light and infectious as *Lost In Yesterday*.

Parker has long said he likes to think of people listening to his albums on headphones, and he's become a festival headliner by doing so; it's easy to picture the communal euphoria that a song as big and, in the best way, obvious as *Instant Destiny* will provoke at Tame Impala's laser-strewn live shows for the album. This doesn't mean Tame Impala has abandoned its stoner-rock roots altogether: *Breathe Deeper* may have a slick R&B sheen that Rihanna would kill for when she's finally back in the studio, but there's a sense of mischief to its wriggling topline that harks back to early singles such as *Lucidity*.

Where *Currents* was generally escapist hedonism, *The Slow Rush* is lyrically more thoughtful. Parker has got married in between the two records, and his own maturity appears a loose theme: the opening *One More Year*, Parker's usually empathetic falsetto distorted into a forbidding warning of mortality, sets the tone for a rough narrative of time passing. There's joy at what we're allowed from life pretty soon – *Instant Destiny* is the second song – so that, by the final *One More Hour*, Tame Impala is back to celebration and filling your headphones with succour.

The middle of *The Slow Rush* sags a little, with *Tomorrow's Dust* an anti-climactic way to end the first side. Unusually fussy, it seems to be Parker bolting four ill-matched ballads together. Side Two doesn't pick up at first, *On Track* an echoey by-numbers woozy drawl, before *Lost In Yesterday*'s attack on nostalgia fetishism kicks *The Slow Rush back* into gear. If Parker's first three albums were about absorbing everything around him, *The Slow Rush* could only be Tame Impala. It's a reminder that, after five years away, no-one has caught up with his vision.

8


Where *Currents* was generally escapist hedonism, *The Slow Rush* is lyrically more thoughtful

NEIL KRUG

Drive-By Truckers

THE UNRAVELING

ATO RECORDS

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

When the Drive-By Truckers unleashed 2016's hard-hitting *American Band*, the gloves came off. A no-nonsense premonition warning against the thumping shit-storm that was about to land in the US, it was an anger-fuelled album that garnered widespread critical acclaim. Now, some three-and-a-half tumultuous years later, they are back with *The Unraveling,* a reflective record salvaged from "the wreckage and aftermath". Opening with the disarmingly gentle, Springsteen-esque *Rosemary With A Bible And A Gun*, we head out on a sepia-tinged road trip full of hope. However, the serenity of the Memphis sun doesn't last long, as the hard-rocking country collective dive into the turbulent twenties and their myriad prospective horrors. "I've always said that all of our records are political, but I've also said that politics is personal," says Patterson Hood. "This album is especially personal." It will come as no surprise then, that three of the album's finest moments – *Thoughts And Prayers*, *Babies In Cages* and *Grievance Merchants* – are also the most politically-charged, tackling gun control laws, Trump's distressing migrant separation policy and the rise of white supremacy. *The Unraveling* is a glorious protest piece that naturally follows *American Band*, raging vehemently against the machine whilst echoing any number of US pop culture's leading lights. Concluding with the transcendental *Awaiting Resurrection*, we shuffle off into the desert, in a punch-drunk haze. Nine magnificent tracks that don't hang around, but most certainly leave a lasting impression. ***Dan Biggane***

9

Nadia Reid

OUT OF MY PROVINCE

SPACEBOMB

Kiwi folk/soul troubadour Nadia Reid's previous album was the ode to survival and self-betterment, *Preservation,* a pitch-perfect and profound meditation on her place in the world. The swell of confidence Reid must have attained from its close-to-universal critical acclaim has clearly lingered, as her much-awaited third album sees the broad scope of her musical ambition grow a whole lot larger. *Out Of My Province* was borne out of a change of label, a switch of producer and a brand new hemisphere to record it in. It's Reid's first with the cooler-than-cool Spacebomb Records, was produced by bearded supremo Matthew E. White in Richmond, Virginia, and backed by the ever-fantastic Spacebomb House Band. The result is a fuller, much richer, more soulful and, ultimately, more expansive collection that threatens to propel her closer to the outer edges of the mainstream consciousness. Reid is adamant that standing still in the same place is not an option: "As an artist, progression is key. I want to always be changing, pushing boundaries, to feel growth," she says. "For me, places are about people. If I connect with a person, I'll remember that, more than an historic building or view. It's my reason for doing this." The album, after all that, was completed in her hometown of Dunedin. Tracks such as opener *All Of My Love, Get The Devil Out* and *Oh Canada* demonstrate an emotional maturity, while lead single *Best Thing* is a multi-layered piece of initimate beauty. *Gary Tipp*

8

ALEX LOVELL-SMITH

Green Day
FATHER OF ALL…
REPRISE

Billie Joe Armstrong's claims that Green Day's 13th album is a "new, sonically modern" sound come true on the thrilling opening title track, a sci-fi falsetto blitz. After that, *Father Of All…* is only different from regular Green Day because it's actually a more traditional proto-rock & roll style than their regular punk. *Sugar Youth* hits on a *Rocky Horror* glam racket and doesn't let go. The brilliantly daft *Oh Yeah!* is Green Day wishing they were a girl group. It's not the revolution, and its best moments are comfortingly familiar, but at least the trio are virally infectious and having fun again. That said, at just 31 minutes, there shouldn't be room for the plodding *Junkies On A High*. It's available in pink and "puke" vinyl, with an explicit "… Motherfuckers" sleeve, plus deluxe packages featuring socks, onesies and 'Father Of All Coffee Roasts' coffee. ***John Earls*** **7**

Courtney Barnett
MTV UNPLUGGED LIVE IN MELBOURNE
MILK!

Recorded last October, Courtney Barnett's hometown MTV Unplugged show was available digitally days later. Arriving on vinyl, the eight songs show Barnett is still a special talent when stripped back. Tender new fingerpicked ballad *Play It On Repeat* is beautiful, so too a spectral piano-led take on *Nameless Faceless*, possibly even more haunting than the original's all-out assault. Covers of Leonard Cohen, Seeker Lover Keeper and Archie Roach are less successful, as Barnett and guests Paul Kelly and Marlon Williams add little to versions of *Charcoal Lane* and *So Long, Marianne* that are pleasant but inessential. Having grown up with MTV Unplugged CDs, Barnett understands how the show works: hearing her morph into The Go-Betweens on an elegant *Sunday Roast* is up there with the format's best moments. *John Earls* **7**

Gil Scott-Heron
WE'RE NEW AGAIN – A REIMAGINING BY MAKAYA MCCRAVEN
XL

Ten years ago, XL released Gil Scott-Heron's final studio album *I'm New Here*, produced by label boss Richard Russell. The singer, who died the following year, was speaking as much as singing in an autobiographical odyssey, which Russell set to a subtly atmospheric backing track of drum 'n' bass and ominous chords. Frequently, Scott-Heron's distinct Chicago drawl was left unaccompanied. A year later, producer Jamie XX was inspired to use the recordings for his own *We're New Here* and now fellow Chicagoan and self-proclaimed "beat scientist" Makaya McCraven has added his name to the list. McCraven magically adds jazz instrumentation, melody, African percussion, plus vocal samples to bring fresh light to the familiar; it's the next best thing to getting Brian Jackson back. ***Ben Wardle*** **8**

Moses Boyd
DARK MATTER
EXODUS

In the collective spirit of jazz, percussionist Moses Boyd has lent his talent to a raft of collaborations, both live and in the studio. A double MOBO and Jazz FM Award winner, he drummed on the Sons Of Kemet *Your Queen Is A Reptile* album and produced Zara McFarlane's *Arise* for Gilles Peterson's Brownswood label. Boyd has also released albums as one part of the sax 'n' drums duo Binker & Moses. Now on his thrilling solo debut, *Dark Matter*, he's called in the favours to assemble a fine cast of players, including guitarist Artie Zaitz, double bassist Gary Zaitz and tenor saxophonist Nubya Garcia. The results are vividly thrilling, and his intricate London jazz grooves summon up diverse echoes of Afrobeat, electronica and ambient jazz. First solo album in and Boyd has concocted an inspired mix. *Gary Tipp* **8**

Lanterns On The Lake
SPOOK THE HERD
BELLA UNION

"You said, do I have hope and I said I don't… but I do," riddles Hazel Wilde on the Newcastle band's fourth. Surveying the gathering storm, here's an end-of-the-world address that finds stirring beauty and defiance in humanity's final acts. While the songs are Lanterns' leanest yet, fusing dreamy pop melodies with Paul Gregory's soaring post-rock guitar, it's Wilde's lyrics that quicken the pulse. On *Swimming Lessons*, she marvels at "Vincent's starry night with the colour drained"; *Blue Screen Beams* laments mobile phone addiction, while lead single *Every Atom* is a potent shot of glorious romanticism. If we are sleepwalking towards apocalypse, Lanterns are here to sing us out in style. "The waters are rising/ our leaders unhinged," sighs Wilde in majestic 3/4 on *Before They Excavate*. "Let's break out the good stuff and toast to the end." Amen to that. ***Gary Walker*** **9**

Kevin Krauter
FULL HAND
BAYONET

Indiana-native Kevin Krauter uses his music to chronicle the unfurling understanding he has of his identity. On his second record, *Full Hand*, Krauter probes questions about his sexuality, the changing relationship with his religious upbringing and his awakening toward self-acceptance. Sonically, it mines a thread of stargazing dream pop to its predecessor *Toss Up*, with honeyed organs and synths providing a bedrock for mesmeric guitar riffs and looping melodies. These strands coalesce into a moment of pop brilliance on *Surprise,* in which Krauter dissects the nuances of his perceived inadequacies. This stand-out track encompasses all of the best elements of Krauter's artistry; deftly crafted anthemic songwriting which manages to be equal parts sardonic and saccharine and soaked in self-reflection. *Sam Willis* **7**

The Orielles
DISCO VOLADOR
HEAVENLY RECORDINGS

It's a familiar story: promising debut (2018's *Silver Dollar Moment*), sell-out tour, then quickly onto album #2. So have Halifax sisters Esmé and Sidonie Hand-Halford (vocals/bass and drums), guitarist Henry Carlyle Wade and keyboardist Alex Stephens made the predictable disappointing second album? No. It's a huge step-on from the debut, fundamentally because of better songwriting, but also because of its dance ethic, with deep, reverby bass and much funkier drumming. Lead single *Come Down On Jupiter* is easily the best thing the band have done, with time signature changes, at least three hummable tunes and a brilliant vocal delivery. Occasionally, some tracks outstay their welcome but most, like *Rapid 1*, *Bobbi's Second World* and album closer *Space Samba (Disco Volador Theme)*, are pop gems beamed down to earth from another planet. ***Ben Wardle*** **8**

Rustin Man
CLOCKDUST
DOMINO

What we might call the 'new pastoral', music rooted in the folk tradition without being constrained by it, is largely the preserve of younger musicians. The re-emergence of Rustin Man, aka former Talk Talk bassist Paul Webb, proves it needn't be so. *Clockdust* is his second LP in a year, remarkable when you consider its predecessor, *Drift Code*, followed 17 years from his acclaimed collaboration with Beth Gibbons, *Out Of Season*. *Clockdust* is subtly different from its predecessor, made up of songs that, in Webb's open estimation, are spacier and less densely layered than before. In terms of the listening experience, that means a melancholy album that deals with nostalgia, and finds a sepia-tinged sweet spot somewhere between Daniel Blumberg and Bill Fay. It's an utterly beguiling LP. *Jonathan Wright* **8**

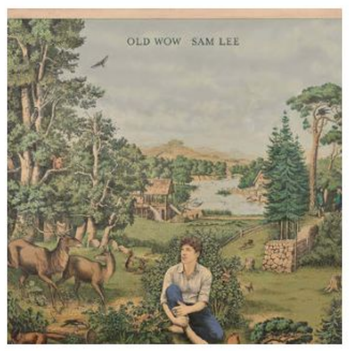
Arborist
A NORTHERN VIEW
ROLLERCOASTER RECORDS

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

It says much about Mark McCambridge that his second collection opens with what sounds like a profoundly expressed love song, delivered in a deliciously lugubrious voice, only for closer examination to reveal an extended metaphor about being embedded in the heart "like a clot that'll thicken in time". *A Stranger Heart* is typical of the album's warmth and surprising beauty. *The Guttural Blues* is a lovely, enigmatic piano ballad, its cursing chorus delivered in a sweet falsetto, and there's Bill Callahan's best in *From The Sagging Bough Of A Maple*'s strings and pedal steel, while the quiet acoustics of *Don't Let The Sky Take Me* recall Patrick Watson. He also narrates a wonderful shaggy dog story amid *Taxi*'s quiet Irish folk, before buzzing guitars accompany the title track's valedictory salute, "I'm here to stay". *Wyndham Wallace* **9**

Sam Lee
OLD WOW
COOKING VINYL

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE



Sam Lee has his own idea of what dissent should sound like. Over two previous albums, he's used his obsessive folksong collecting to defend centuries-old minority communities (his arrangements, eschewing guitar for electronics and pan-global instruments, have challenged folk traditionalists) and he's also become a major voice in the environmental movement, performing concerts with nightingales among other things. With stark beauty and uplifting ire, Lee delivers a devastating chamber-folk paean-cum-eulogy to the natural world here, with a full band and assistance from Bernard Butler and Cocteau Twins' Elizabeth Fraser. Reworking traditional songs by the Copper family, Romany gypsy singer Freda Black and Scottish traveller Stanley Robertson, this dazzling suite of songs is driven by despair, hope and the concept of reconnection. ***Chris Parkin*** **9**

WHAT'S ON IN THE SHOP

MATTERS OF VINYL IMPORTANCE
HOXTON

Psychedelic Porn Crumpets
AND NOW FOR THE WHATCHAMACALLIT
MARATHON ARTISTS

One of our regulars turned me on to this Australian psychedelic rock band a while ago (cheers Gaz). Although the latest album came out in the middle of 2019, it wasn't until I saw them at the Electric Ballroom that it all made sense. They sound pretty much like you would expect a band called Psychedelic Porn Crumpets to sound!

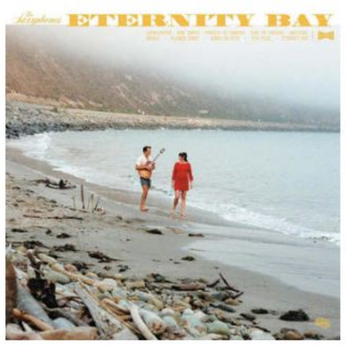
Georgia
SEEKING THRILLS
DOMINO

Having worked behind the counter at Rough Trade, this girl already knows how to sell records. With *Seeking Thrills*, her second album, she's an early contender for Album Of The Year. Mixing techno, house and many other dance influences, she somehow manages to make the familiar sound unique.

Lou Reed
ROCK 'N' ROLL ANIMAL
RCA

Recorded in 1973 and released a year later, *Rock 'N' Roll Animal* only contains five tracks. It doesn't need any more. The best live album ever? For people of a certain age, quite probably 'yes'.

The Saxophones
ETERNITY BAY
FULL TIME HOBBY



The latest release from husband and wife duo Alexi Erenkov and Alison Alderdice pretty much picks up where they left off on their previous album: minimal folk rock meets dream pop that closely recalls the likes of Timber Timbre. Recorded by Cameron Spies, the analogue 16-track-tape recording method complemented the band's preferred minimalism. Perhaps the biggest evolution on *Eternity Bay* is the role of jazz, not so much present in pace or rhythms but more via the smooth, unwinding blasts of saxophone that glide through the record. The result is an album that feels strangely lounge-esque, straddling the line between jazz-inflected indie and bare-bones singer-songwriter offerings. There are plenty of nice moments here that feel warm and sincere, never straying towards affected tonality. **7**
Daniel Dylan Wray

Marc Almond
CHAOS AND A DANCING STAR
BMG

Perhaps unsurprisingly – he's 62 now, and his 2004 motorbike accident almost killed him – thoughts of impending death haunt Marc Almond's 24th studio album. The handsome *Cherry Tree* meditates on legacy, and on the quietly proggy *When The Stars Are Gone* he worries, "Who will sing our song?". On *Hollywood Forever*, a slowly unfurling piano ballad, he seeks enduring fame in a cemetery, though its lovely coda is interrupted by an unwarranted guitar solo. Nonetheless, even this finds beauty in decay, and Almond's voice bleeds sincerity, especially cloaked in *Dreaming Of Sea*'s rolling piano and strings. His epitaph, however, lurks in the dramatic album opener *Black Sunrise*, which, like a French take on Pink Floyd, encourages us to "Kiss me till I die." *Daniel Dylan Wray* **7**

Huey Lewis & The News
WEATHER
BMG

You wouldn't know Huey Lewis has gone deaf from that good-natured voice, as agreeably hoarse as when his band started and as appealing as his craggy looks. Nonetheless, this 10th album, his first in almost 20 years, sounds as though he's not heard anything new in a while. *Weather*'s his most musically imaginative in a long time, where he stands before a foggy grey skyline, but if *Her Love Is Killin' Me* is predictably bluesy, full of familiar imagery, guitar solos and soulful brass, it's nonetheless well executed, and *Hurry Back Baby* showcases classy guitar licks as well as good-time grooves. *While We're Young* playfully admits, "We're not as good as we once were" but sounds classically American, and a cover of Eugene Church's *Pretty Girls Everywhere* exercises the band's righteous doo-wop skills. *Wyndham Wallace* **6**

Destroyer
HAVE WE MET
MERGE

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

Eight years on from Destroyer's seminal release, *Kaputt*, Dan Bejar's latest album could well be regarded as something of an ostensible follow-up. His free-flow stream-of-consciousness lyricism returns, as does a more stripped-back solo approach to the record. There's less full-band oomph and more thick layers of atmosphere and immersive textures, some of which were even plucked from previous sessions from *Kaputt* to create new dramatic soundscapes. Despite the low-key, lo-fi approach (Bejar recorded his vocals in his kitchen via GarageBand), the album is not lacking in richness or depth. Gliding seamlessly between art-pop, indie and minimal electronic pop, coupled with Bejar's distinct warm yet cold vocals, *Have We Met* is his most stirring album in years. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **9**

MY NEW ALBUM
SOCCER MOMMY

"I want the record to feel like a relic from the past that's been damaged or degraded with age because it kind of represents the problems that I've developed as I've grown up and how they've changed me," says Sophie Allison, aka Nashville's Soccer Mommy. "The album centres around three different sections that are signified by three colours: blue, yellow and grey. Blue symbolises sadness and depression. Yellow symbolises sickness (both physical and mental). The grey section represents darkness, emptiness and loss."

Soccer Mommy
COLOR THEORY
LOMA VISTA

After 2018's debut *Clean* saw Sophie Allison support Vampire Weekend and Paramore, and duet with The National, her second album as Soccer Mommy continues her remarkable growth. *Color Theory* was recorded with The War On Drugs producer Gabe Wax near Allison's childhood home in Nashville, but is far closer spiritually to Smashing Pumpkins than it is to country twang. There's a yearning drama in Allison coming to terms with mortality on *Gray Light* and *Yellow Is The Color Of Her Eyes* that Billy Corgan used to excel at, though Allison only needs her drowsy, doomy voice to conjure up her fatalistic visions. Capable of switching from the Juliana Hatfield-style simplicity of *Stain* to restless riffing on *Lucy* and *Crawling In My Skin*, Allison is only 22 but already exuding a veteran's breadth. *John Earls* **8**

BRIAN ZIFF

Lee Ranaldo & Raül Refree

NAMES OF NORTH END WOMEN

MUTE

Ex-Sonic Youth guitarist Lee Ranaldo has been knocking out a steady stream of solo albums since the band split in 2011, usually touching upon his more melodic-leaning influences with albums evoking Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Big Star and R.E.M. Here, in collaboration once again with Spanish producer Raül Refree, he's leaning more heavily towards experimental and minimalist compositions. Spoken-word segments hover over eerie soundscapes with not an electric guitar in sight. At times, it closely resembles his 2009 collaboration with Jim O'Rourke and Christoph Heemann. It's full of tape hiss and whirring hums, but there's also an accessible aspect to it with Ranaldo's voice naturally sweet and melody-soaked – resulting in a fascinating album that is perpetually surprising. ***Daniel Dylan Wray*** **7**

Jason McMahon

ODD WEST

SHINKOYO

Brooklyn's Jason McMahon's 'west' is indeed sometimes 'odd', though always in a positive fashion, and not just because of his unconventional tuning. There's an American Primitive style to McMahon's delicate fingerpicked guitar instrumentals, but he's probably the first to add dreamy, wordless backing vocals that might suit an idyllic 1970s soft focus, soft porn film. Of course, more obvious comparisons would be John Fahey and his contemporary disciples, such as William Tyler, but there are moments, like the fluttering guitar phrases in *Oh, Moon!*, which bring to mind multi-instrumentalist Aukai. *Old Career In An Old Town*, which, at five minutes, is the longest of these otherwise concise sketches, offers a similar purity to Jim O'Rourke's late-90s, Nic Roeg inspired albums. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

Dan Deacon

MYSTIC FAMILIAR

DOMINO

After spending a few years in the world of film composition, US musician Dan Deacon returns with his first album since 2015's splendid *Gliss Riffer*. The restriction of not being able to use his voice in his film work has clearly shaped this album, with Deacon throwing it front and centre here. His Wayne Coyne-esque tones drift ethereally above bursts of squelchy electronics, propulsive rhythms or sometimes just simple and subtle piano. It's an album that is equally as beautiful as it is energetic, exposing a tenderness and vulnerability at its core, while never forgetting the key foundation of making forward-moving and sprawling compositions. The time, the effort, love and dedication that the indecently talented Deacon has put into this record, combined with his clearly honed cinematic craft, results in the most satisfying work he's ever made. ***Daniel Dylan Wray*** **9**

Paul Haslinger

EXIT GHOST

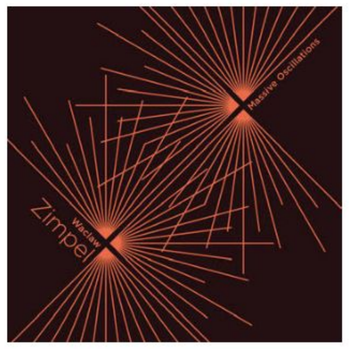
ARTIFICAL INSTINCT

Fans of Max Richter and Nils Frahm need not despair: there's a new kid on the block. Well, perhaps 'kid' is a bit excessive: 57-year-old Austrian composer Haslinger was a late addition to Tangerine Dream in 1985, before relocating to LA to become a composer and arranger for Hollywood thrillers (*Underworld*; *After.Life*). So what exactly does this, his "long thought-out opus", sound like? Don't be put off by the blurb: "…a moment caught in time, flicking through reference points, taking an ethereal excursion that permeates musical genres…" Yada, yada. It's piano-led, plangent and melodic. There's *Dear Prudence* meets Bernard Hermann in *Intrinsic* and heart-tugging harmonic resolution in *Berlin 86–11*. If you're a fan of Richter's *Sleep*, Frahm's *Spaces* or *All Melody*, you'll love it. *Ben Wardle* **7**

Waclaw Zimpel

MASSIVE OSCILLATIONS

ONGEHOORD RECORDS

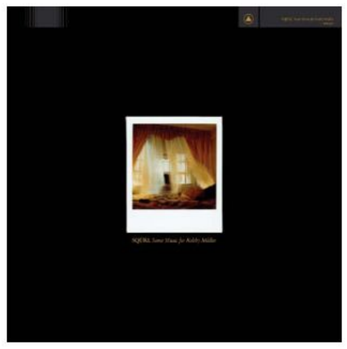


We can judge this one by its cover, or, more precisely, its title. The second solo album from Poland's most adventurous multi-instrumentalist and composer, Wacław Zimpel – acclaimed in 2017 for the spectral drones and psych-folk-jazz magic he conjured up on his collaborative album with Kuba Ziołek for the Instant Classic label – is an intense and propulsive bedfellow of James Holden's motorik-skronk opus, *The Animal Spirits*. It's not surprising, then, to find out that Holden was actually on mixing duties here, egging his friend's whirling-dervish synth oscillations onwards and upwards through a rich, swirling cacophony of bass and alto clarinet, prepared piano and guitar, and into a levitational bliss-out zone inspired by Don Cherry's transcendental jazz, early electronics and minimalist composition. Massive, indeed. ***Chris Parkin*** **8**

SQÜRL

SOME MUSIC FOR ROBBY MÜLLER

SACRED BONES

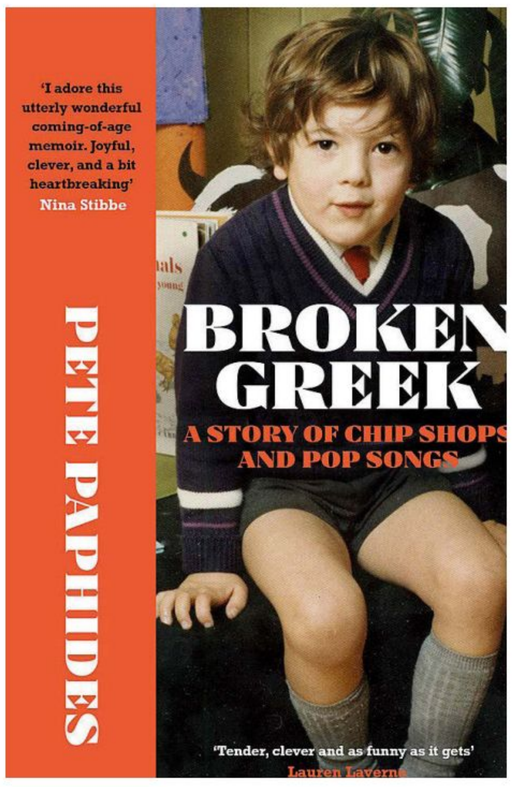


Jim Jarmusch's band recently provided the soundtrack to a documentary about the late cinematographer, Robby Müller. While a lot of SQÜRL's previous music, be it film scores or otherwise, has tended to gravitate towards the doomy, sludgy and often drone-filled side of things, there's a deftness and lightness to be found here. Rich, thick, engulfing clouds of texture are formed from softly played guitars, humming organs and gentle tip-tap drums. It adds an almost ethereal, bordering on pastoral, overarching tone to the record. It's a most fitting tribute to the man who made Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* such a beautifully shot film. The music here evokes the same kind of infinite landscapes that fill the film along with the dusty and weathered characters that walk through them. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **8**

Broken Greek

PETE PAPHIDES

QUERCUS £20



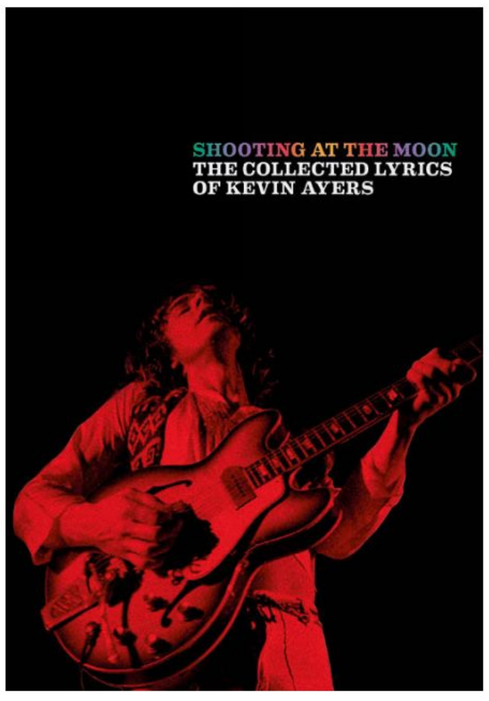
When Jenny, the protagonist of track three on The Velvet Underground's *Loaded* album, was just five years old, she put the radio on and her life was saved by rock 'n' roll. A similar thing happened to music journalist Pete Paphides. This time, however, the saviour was pop music. Having been displaced from Cyprus to Birmingham as a nipper, Pete was a shy, anxious kid (he was convinced his parents wanted to swap him for Jimmy Osmond) who didn't speak to anybody other than his family from the age of four to seven. In his withdrawn world, the pop songs blaring out of the radio and the bands singing them took on a heightened importance. Meaning that at various times, Pete was in total thrall of Brotherhood Of Man, Lynsey de Paul, Wings and, even, The Barron Knights – convinced that their songs were talking directly to him. So, if you're in the market for a wonderfully written, deeply touching, pitch-perfect childhood memoir laced liberally with 70s nostalgia, then you need look no further. *Gary Tipp*

9

Shooting At The Moon

KEVIN AYERS

FABER MUSIC £20



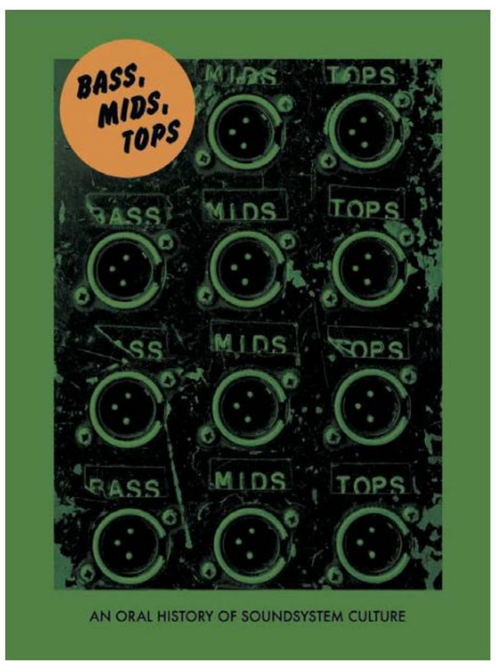
Canterbury scenester and louche bohemian singer-songwriter Kevin Ayers was a founding member of the Soft Machine, and a major yet laid-back force in the English psychedelic movement. The late, great John Peel wrote in his autobiography that "Kevin Ayers' talent is so acute you could perform major eye surgery with it." He was also the 'bugger' infamously referenced in the John Cale lyric on the *Slow Dazzle* album track *Guts* ("the bugger in the short sleeves, fucked my wife/did it quick and split"). With affectionate, heartfelt introductions from his daughter, Galen, fellow Softie Robert Wyatt, and writer John Payne, *Shooting At The Moon* includes the collected lyrics from his gloriously erratic solo career, covering such cult works of wonder as *Joy Of A Toy, Bananamour, Whatevershebringswesing* and his 2007 reflective swansong *The Unfairground*. It also contains pages from Ayers' own notebooks, a slew of exclusive photos and even the occasional recipe (mixed smoked fish platter anyone?). Ayers passed away in 2013, and this book is a great way to remember him. *GT*

8

Bass, Mids, Tops

JOE MUGGS/BRIAN DAVID STEVENS

STRANGE ATTRACTOR PRESS £25



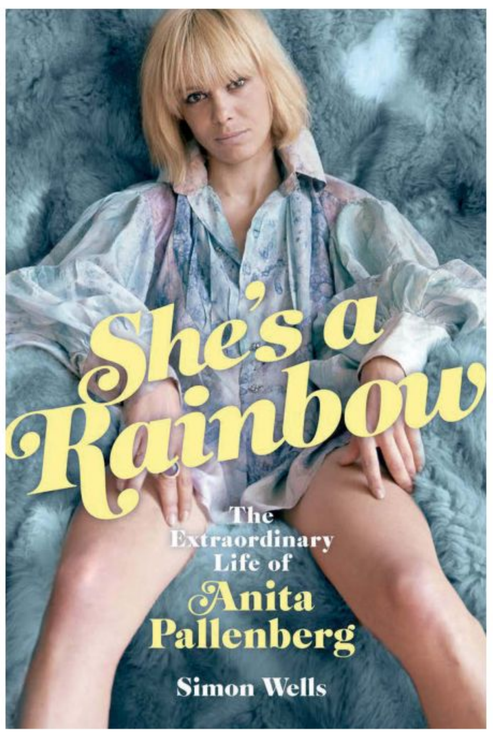
Ever since the arrival from the Caribbean of the Windrush generation, soundsystems have been instrumental in shaping several generations of British youth culture. Reggae, ska, dub, rave, jungle, grime and dubstep have all had their basslines blared out through towering home-built speakers, often directly onto the swarming streets of events such as the Notting Hill Carnival. It's an important story less told, which is why *Bass, Mids, Tops: An Oral History Of The UK's Soundsystem Culture* is such a fascinating read and an essential 488-page slice of cultural history. Comprising of interviews expertly conducted over many years by dance music journalist Joe Muggs, and more than ably assisted by the striking photography of collaborator Brian David Stevens, it skilfully recounts the pulsating narrative of bassbin Britain in no uncertain amount of style and unfailing dedication. The book leaves no pertinent interviewee unquestioned, with Dennis Bovell, Norman Jay MBE, Youth, Adrian Sherwood, Skream and Rinse FM's Sarah Lockhart among many others to appear on its hallowed pages. *GT*

9

She's A Rainbow

SIMON WELLS

OMNIBUS PRESS £20



The German-Italian actress/model Anita Pallenberg was no mere girlfriend of the band, and her impact on The Rolling Stones was considerable, influencing the way they looked and the modish circles they moved in. Long-term partner Keith Richards openly admits her sartorial sway over him: "I started to become a fashion icon, for wearing my old lady's clothes," he once noted. A powerful and intimidating muse, it's strongly rumoured the *Beggars Banquet* album was remastered after she criticised it, her out-of-the-ordinary life is recounted in detailed and dynamic fashion by music writer Simon Wells. Pallenberg may have been carousing with Federico Fellini's Dolce Vita crowd three years before the band had formed, but she will always be inextricably associated with the Stones, notably her relationships with Richards, but also Brian Jones (she left him for Keith after Jones became abusive) and Mick Jagger (they got very close on the set of the movie *Performance*). Coincidentally, it's also the second book in this issue of *Long Live Vinyl* to come with a pair of fetching knees on its cover. *GT*

8

DREAM MACHINES

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PLATINUM PL500 II SPEAKERS

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1
2
3

Audio-Technica AT-LP5X

TURNTABLE

£349 eu.audio-technica.com

Where usability meets audiophile design, **Paul Rigby** assesses the new, improved AT-LP5X

Based on a direct-drive system, this 2020 upgrade on AT's hugely popular and highly dependable LP5 is notable – at least when compared to the company's similarly priced AT-LP140XP turntable – for lacking any of that model's DJ furniture, like its parent model taking a more traditional design route that will appeal to vinyl addicts of all persuasions.

You get a single, rotating knob, which infuses the deck with power and selects the speed. The J-shaped arm is the same as the 140, though. It features an anti-skate wheel, an SME-type headshell connector, arm lift and arm clip to keep the arm tube secure in case of accidental knocks.

The LP5x arrives with several changes to the original LP5, including the integration of 78rpm play for shellac lovers, plus the inclusion of the latest AT-VM95E cartridge, which replaces the venerable AT-95E. There's a change of headshell, too. The built-in power supply of the original has been kicked outside the plinth to a wall wart, while the power switch is integrated within the speed selector and the built-in phono amp adds a moving coil option. I like the fact that Audio-Technica has put some physical distance between the USB and phono amp outputs, which will help it to reduce high-frequency noise.

The LP5x plinth is basically the same size as the 140 and LP5 versions, but it's deeper than the 140 by around 1.5cm. Nevertheless, the LP5x's plinth is lighter than the 140. The latter weighs in at 10kg, the LP5x's at 7.3kg. That makes sense because the LP5x doesn't have the built-in power supply.

The LP5x has an MM/MC phono amp and a USB port (supporting up to 16bit/48kHz) for vinyl ripping. Hanging off the end of the LP5x's arm is an AT-HS6 headshell and a black AT-VM95E Dual Moving Magnet cartridge. The included AT-VM95E improves upon the older, classic AT-95E, which has been around the hi-fi firmament for decades. If you get the choice, I'd go for the former. Performance is improved and music sounds a little more sophisticated through the VM. More than that, you can

The AT-LP5x is a well-executed design that sounds great for the outlay. It's also well built and easy to set up

Audio-Technica has refined an already excellent deck, but it is up against tough competition

upgrade the cartridge by swapping a better-quality stylus into the host cartridge body. This means that, if you want to play 78s, you don't have to change the entire cartridge. Finally, a dust cover is included.

Playing both rock and jazz LPs, I compared the LP5x with the AT-LP140XP, using an external phono amplifier and the same AT-VM95E cartridge. The internal one is OK, but you may wish to upgrade to an external model.

In short? The 140 offered tighter and deeper bass with more heft and mass, although the LP5x was hardly bass shy and performed well. The LP5x offered much more space around the midrange and treble, which allowed detail to infuse the upper frequencies. Cymbal hits were tonally more complex, for example.

Compared to the similarly priced Fluance RT83, the latter's upper-mids exhibited a greater focus and precision. The LP5x was slightly more informative in the midband and its midrange was a touch more incisive, delivering more information with more control in the bass.

The LP5 is a firm favourite with the *LLV* team and the LP5x builds on that success admirably. Of course, it's not a full-on audiophile turntable and doesn't eclipse Rega's class-leading Planar 1, but it's an excellent, well-priced design. It offers a great all-round suite of features and, within a hotly contested price category that's occupied by the company's own AT-LP140XP, Fluance's RT83, the RP1, Pro-Ject's RPM 1 Carbon and even the cheaper Lenco L-3808, the sound quality is top notch and highly recommended. Audio-Technica should be congratulated for its even-handed approach when designing this deck. There's something for everyone from the AT-LP5x. The company has taken a well-loved, budget turntable and squeezed even more out of it. The LP5x deserves to be very popular – and I'm sure it will be.

9

THEY HAVE TAKEN A WELL-LOVED BUDGET TURNTABLE AND SQUEEZED EVEN MORE OUT OF IT

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
LIFESTYLE FEATURES	NONE
BALANCED SOUND	
DETAIL	
CONTROLLED BASS	

A retro-futuristic green glow emanates from the MT2

McIntosh MT2 PRECISION TURNTABLE

£4,995 jordanacoustics.co.uk

The much-admired US brand has delivered a vinyl spinner of real beauty. **John Pickford** is wowed

New York-based audio specialist McIntosh has been producing fine audio equipment for over 70 years – the PA used at the Woodstock festival in 1969 was powered by McIntosh amplifiers. However, despite being as well known in the USA as the likes of Quad and Naim are here, the company is only now becoming a recognisable force in the UK.

The company's products are distinctively recognisable and while this 'entry level' turntable lacks the chunky retro speed meter and illuminated platter found on its flagship model, the MT2 is unmistakably a McIntosh. Fibre-optic light diffusers emit a gentle green glow from beneath the platter, a trademark McIntosh touch that complements the deck's elegant styling.

Much like the AVID Ingenium Plug & Play I reviewed last year, the MT2 arrives pretty much ready to go straight from the box. The tonearm and cartridge come factory fitted and calibrated, with tracking and anti-skating forces preset. Following the clear instructions, all you have to do is attach the drive belt, fit the platter, felt mat and counterweight, plug in and you're ready to start spinning vinyl.

The plinth is made from resonance optimised, highly compressed wood with an attractive black lacquer finish, while integral acrylic plates minimise vibrations for optimum performance. Also resisting and absorbing external vibrations is the two-piece platter.

THEY SAY THAT BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER, AND I FIND THE MCINTOSH MT2 INCREDIBLY ATTRACTIVE

The outer platter is made from dynamically balanced polyoxymethylene, while the smaller inner platter is made from CNC precision-milled aluminium. This platter rotates on a polished, tempered steel shaft in a sintered bronze bushing, with the drive belt attached to the DC motor. An external, voltage-stabilised power supply feeds the motor, which is decoupled from the chassis ensuring effective isolation from mechanical interference.

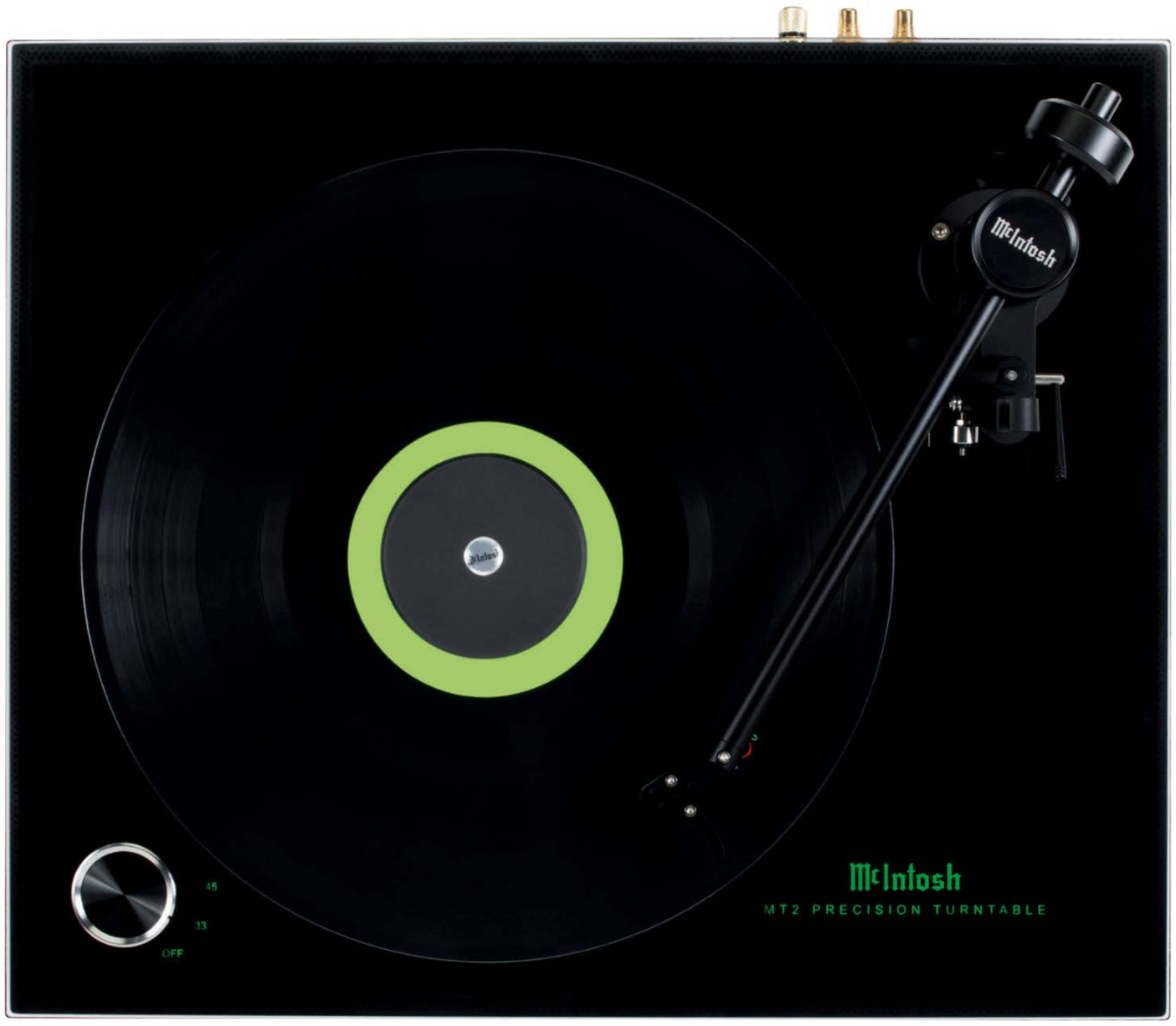
Switching from 33rpm to 45rpm is made convenient, with a chunky switch on the front-left of the plinth, so there's no need to remove the platter to manually adjust the drive belt as some decks require you to. In fact, the speeds are electronically controlled by a servo system, while a trim control allows for fine adjustment of both speeds.

The tonearm is made from an alloy called duralumin, with special damping material to provide excellent rigidity while remaining light.

Attached to it is a Sumiko Blue Point 2 high-output moving coil cartridge, which features a fine elliptical diamond stylus. As a high-output MC design, the BP2 will work with moving magnet (MM) phono stages as well as many MC ones, however, as its output is significantly higher than standard low-output designs, it could be a little too hot for some sensitive MC inputs.

As previously indicated, setting up the MT2 for record replay is a doddle, with unboxing to needle-drop taking less than 15 minutes. The supplied illustrated instructions are clear and easy enough to follow even for turntable novices. As with all things visual relating to audio equipment, beauty is in the eye of the beholder and I find the McIntosh turntable incredibly attractive. I prefer the traditional look of a solid rectangular plinth, rather than the skeletal designs that have become popular in recent years. That said, I often find equipment festooned with LEDs, particularly of the neon blue kind, distracting, but the green glow from beneath the MT2 is subtle and classy in a retro-futuristic way.

First spin is Kate Bush's *Moving* from *The Kick Inside* (EMI 1978), one of my top test tracks. From the get-go, it's clear this turntable is an extremely capable performer. As soon as the first bass guitar note is plucked, underpinning Kate's frosty vocal, I am aware that the deck not only plumbs the depths with a rock-solid bass foundation, but also has a magical airiness to the uppermost frequencies. Pitch stability is pretty well perfect, as evidenced by the accurate and lucid reproduction of piano, while imaging is spot-on both in terms of width and depth.



Flicking the mono switch on my valve MM phono stage, I put on my cherished original copy of Pink Floyd's *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* (Columbia 1967) and I'm met with a stable and focused mono image. This album is all about the broad midrange, there's no low bass or much information above 12kHz on the record, yet the MT2 cuts through like a hot knife through butter. Syd Barrett's twangy Telecaster guitar often battles to be heard above Rick Wright's rinky-dink Farfisa organ and the myriad psychedelic echo and phasing effects. However, the combination of a precision motor and forensic cartridge reveals each element of the busy mix distinctly.

My only quibble is the noise of the motor, which is only just on the right side of acceptable. Most listeners will not be bothered by this, and it doesn't impede the enjoyment of music, yet I feel this should be pointed out.

The MT2 is well worth considering if you're in the market for a turntable in this league. Its classy visual appeal is easily matched by its solid sonic performance. **8**

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
REVEALING AND INVOLVING SOUND	MOTOR NOISE
SOLID BASS PERFORMANCE	PRICE POINT/ COMPETITION
PITCH STABILITY	
EASE OF SETUP AND USE	
VISUAL STYLING	

The design aesthetic of the Leema phono stage is simplicity itself

Leema Acoustics

ESSENTIALS PHONO STAGE

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

£595 leema-acoustics.com

A revealing phono stage gets **John Pickford** into the groove

Founded by former BBC engineers Lee Taylor and Mallory Nicholls, Leema Acoustics specialise in high-quality British hi-fi electronics.

The Essentials range of components sit on the first rung of Leema's price ladder, however the company doesn't do cheap-as-chips budget gear, as this high-resolution phono amplifier demonstrates. The unit is nothing much to look at, however it's styled for discretion rather than bling factor. The front panel sports nothing but the ubiquitous blue LED to indicate power on, while the back panel contains the essential connectivity and settings.

Inputs and outputs are available via stereo pairs of decent-quality RCA phono connectors, while a ground point is provided to earth your turntable and eliminate hum; a power input accepts the supplied wall-wart supply.

Although this phono stage is compatible with all types of cartridge, user adjustments are kept to a minimum. All Moving Magnet cartridges operate with an impedance of 47k ohms, however MC cartridges can be loaded optimally for ultimate performance, with some units offering multiple impedance loading options. Leema's MC stage is preset at 90 ohms, which is fine for the vast majority of moving coils. The switch to select MM or MC operation is a latching type, accessed through a small hole, while a similar switch arrangement allows for bass-cut. This isn't a tone control, though, rather it's a high-pass filter set at a low 20Hz, which is designed to eliminate unwanted subsonic rumble caused by warped records or turntable bearing noise.

Connecting the Leema to my reference system in place of my valve Icon Audio phono stage, I select the MC setting, which suits my modified Benz Micro cartridge perfectly. My first observation is the silent operation, which betters my valve unit by some margin. Fully warmed up, I begin by spinning some classic heavy rock, starting with Black Sabbath's debut album (Vertigo 1970), followed by the contemporaneous *Led Zeppelin III* (Atlantic 1970). The Sabbath album has an incredibly heavy bottom end that can sound loose and ponderous on some systems, yet the Leema's firm grip of the low-end provides a solid foundation without any thickening or flub. This bass control is evident on the Zeppelin LP, too, with John Bonham's kick drum work sounding rhythmically correct, presenting the right proportion of attack. In this respect, the little Leema out-performs the looser nature of my valve stage's low-end response.

I mellow out to some acoustic recordings courtesy of Nick Drake's *Five Leaves Left* (Island 1969). Here, Drake's vocal is finely etched, while the leading edges of the string section are crisply reproduced. The presentation is irrepressibly hi-fi in character and I missed the fluid nature and top end of my valve stage.

With all styles of music, the Leema keeps a firm dynamic grip with authority that belies its modest proportions. Fed with a good turntable set-up and connected to a line-level amplifier of at least equal price and performance, the Leema will have you discovering previously unheard details within your cherished collection of vinyl.

9

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
REVEALING AND INVOLVING SOUND	LIMITED USER ADJUSTMENTS
BASS WEIGHT AND CONTROL	
BROAD TONAL PALETTE	

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CLOSER

VINYL'S GREATEST FINAL TRACKS

#10 BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS
REDEMPTION SONG

The folk ballad that brought Marley's final album to a close was a powerful epitaph, observes **Gary Tipp**

Bob Marley's final studio album, *Uprising*, proved to be a profound swansong for the man who had near single-handedly put Jamaican reggae on the global map. It was released on 10 June, 1980 and Marley died less than a year later from the cancer that had been diagnosed three years previously.

Understandably, the album is one of Marley's most devoutly religious, with every track addressing an aspect of his Rastafarian beliefs. It seems clear from *Uprising*'s lyrical content that he was very aware his time was slipping away – something confirmed by his wife Rita: "He was already secretly in a lot of pain and dealing with his own mortality, a feature that is clearly apparent in the album."

The closing track was the deeply personal *Redemption Song*, a remarkably poignant defining statement. It was written by Marley in the final months of 1979, during The Wailers' live shows for the *Survival* album.

The story goes that when Marley first handed Chris Blackwell the rough cut for *Uprising*, the Island Records label owner's initial instinct was that something was missing. Marley duly returned the following day and presented him with the spiritual folk ballad *Redemption Song*, which completed the album's running order in no uncertain terms. The track was recorded at Marley's Tuff Gong studio in Jamaica, with the singer accompanying himself on acoustic guitar.

Bearing close relation to a *The Times They Are A-Changin'* era Bob Dylan track, *Redemption Song* was far removed from the roots reggae of the rest of the album (which also contained the perfect pop of *Could You Be Loved*) and much unlike anything Marley had ever recorded before. A full 'reggae-fied' band version of the song later appeared as a B-side and a bonus track on the 2001 pressing of the album.

FREE YOURSELF

The song's lyrics were inspired directly by an historic speech given by the legendary Jamaican civil rights leader Marcus Garvey in Nova Scotia in Canada in 1937. The lines in which Marley sings about the need to emancipate oneself from mental slavery and that none but ourselves have the power to free our minds from being mentally enslaved, were taken from Garvey's speech.

The result was a powerful statement against the negatives of the collective establishment, as Marley condemns those who glorify the practice of 'control'. His words instil faith that no matter the power of the oppressor, every individual is free in mind, body and spirit.

JOHNNY AND JOE

It's no wonder, then, that the song was subsequently covered by a couple of anti-authoritarian legends, with country icon Johnny Cash, as well as romantic old punk Joe Strummer, both committing their own heartfelt versions to vinyl.

Other artists to record cover versions of the track to varying standards of quality include Stevie Wonder, Ian Brown, Manfred Mann's Earth Band, Rihanna and Eternal. ●

"He was secretly in a lot of pain and dealing with his own mortality"

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